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Connect...

Be active...

Take notice...

Keep learning...

Give...

Five ways to wellbeing

A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being

Written by: Jody Aked, Nic Marks, Corrina Cordon, Sam Thompson

centre for well-being, **nef** (the new economics foundation)

Five ways to wellbeing

A review of the most up-to-date evidence suggests that building the following five actions into our day-to-day lives is important for well-being:

Connect...

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Be active...

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Take notice...

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Keep learning...

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

Give...

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Contents

Introduction **1**

The *Foresight* programme 1

The task 1

Well-being 1

The selection process **3**

Evidence-based 3

Universal appeal 3

Target the individual 3

The need for variety 4

The evidence base **5**

Short-listed actions 5

Long-listed actions 11

Actions for change **13**

Communicating the messages **15**

Conclusion **17**

Appendix 1 **18**

Methodology 18

Appendix 2 **20**

Endnotes **21**

Introduction

The *Foresight* programme

The UK Government's *Foresight* programme, alongside the Horizon Scanning Centre, uses evidence from across a wide range of disciplines to analyse and develop policy options to address key issues that will impact on UK society over the next 10–20 years.

The *2008 Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project* aims to analyse the most important drivers of mental capital and well-being to develop a long-term vision for maximising mental capital and well-being in the UK for the benefits of society and the individual.

The task

From the evidence that has been collated from identified challenge areas (Learning through Life, Mental Health, Well-being and work, Learning Difficulties, and Mental Capital through Life), the centre for well-being at **nef** (the new economics foundation) was commissioned to develop a set of evidence-based actions to improve personal well-being. **nef** is an independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being. The centre for well-being aims to promote the concept of well-being as a legitimate and useful aim of policy and to provide people with the understanding and tools to redefine wealth in terms of well-being.

The initial phase of the project focused on the development of a long list of actions for enhancing well-being based on evidence in the *Foresight Challenge Reports* and emerging literature in positive psychology. The challenge was to reduce this long list to a short list that reflected key findings in the research. The second phase of the project was concerned with messaging the selected actions. Please see Appendix 1 for a detailed methodology.

Well-being

The concept of well-being comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well. Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive

experience of their life. Equally important for well-being is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one's life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of well-being.[1]

In recent years, there has been a discernible shift of focus in the field of psychology from illness to well-being. The emergence of positive psychology and the science of well-being has brought with it greater interest in establishing the underlying causes of feeling and functioning well. As Professor Jenkins' report summarises: 'We do not yet know how positive and negative mental health relates to each other. There is some evidence that the two dimensions may be independent rather than opposite ends of a single dimension.'[2] Professor Huppert's science review explores this relationship in more detail, concluding that 'while some factors affect both well-being and ill-being, there are other drivers which influence well-being alone'.[3]

The first study in the UK to measure well-being estimated that only 14 per cent of the population has a high level of well-being, referred to as 'flourishing'. A further 14 per cent has very low well-being, notwithstanding individuals with a diagnosed mental disorder.[4] A whole range of factors determine an individual's level of personal well-being but evidence indicates that the things we do and the way we think can have the greatest impact.[5]

The selection process

From a broad evidence base, and a large amount of material, some key considerations guided the selection process for a set of actions to enhance personal well-being. The following points reflect both criteria outlined in the project brief and findings from the well-being and mental health promotion fields on the success of intervention-based approaches to behaviour change.

Evidence-based

As set out in the project brief, the aim was to create a set of actions that are evidence-based. It should be noted, however, that there is little epidemiological evidence examining measures and determinants of well-being. Furthermore, there has been greater prevalence of cross-sectional studies in the literature, which do not look at well-being among the same individuals across long time periods.[6] Therefore, confidently asserting causality is, in most cases, difficult. More recent studies, however, have begun to look at the effectiveness of specific interventions on the promotion of well-being, which provide an insight into those factors on which a targeted approach should focus.

It should also be noted that there is very little literature, if any, on effect sizes. This was confirmed with interviews with the Challenge Leaders[7]. Therefore, it is difficult to specify and compare the impact of different actions on the promotion of well-being. Currently, the general consensus seems to be that a holistic approach to improving one's well-being is important.

Universal appeal

As indicated in the project proposal, the aim was to establish a generic set of actions that has wide-ranging appeal. It was important to have evidence for the impact of actions to enhance personal well-being for people at different ages, for example.

Target the individual

The project brief was to devise a set of actions that enhance an individual's personal well-being. Therefore, actions oriented at the societal or

governmental level would not be applicable to changes that an individual has the capacity to make in their own lives.

The need for variety

Evidence from the field of positive psychology has indicated that any set of sustainable actions will need to overcome the tendency for 'hedonic adaptation'. Given that repetition can remove the potency of activities, it has been suggested that strategies need to be varied so they stay 'fresh'.[8] This way, they are also not approached as a sense of duty.

It is important, therefore, that the action themes are very distinct. This way, people can try different approaches to promoting their well-being without feeling that their efforts are stagnating. Furthermore, different approaches will suit different people. With the UK population as the target audience, variety is one approach to capturing the interests of a diverse population and engaging with as many people as possible.

The evidence base

From a broad evidence base, a long list of actions emerged (see Appendix 2), which was reduced to a set of five key messages on the evidence around social relationships, physical activity, awareness, learning and giving.

In order to effectively communicate the main influencers of well-being, the messages have been organised into five key actions, each offering examples of more specific behaviours that enhance well-being.

Short-listed actions

Connect…

With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

Evidence from the Foresight Challenge Reports

The evidence emerging from the *Foresight Challenge Reports* indicates that social relationships are critical for promoting well-being and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health. This seems to be the case for people across all ages.

National surveys of psychiatric morbidity in adults aged 16–64 in Great Britain show that the most significant difference between this group and people without mental ill-health is social participation.[9] Furthermore, a primary social network (defined as the total number of close relatives and friends) of three or less predicts the probability of common mental health disorders (CMDs) in the future even when previous CMDs have been adjusted for.[10,11] Importantly, these findings are reflected in survey results showing that people want to spend more time with people who are important to them. Data from the *2005 British Attitude Survey* shows that since 1989 there has been a sustained increase in the numbers of both men and women who prefer to spend more time with family and friends and less

time at work.[12,13] Similar findings from the Work Foundation Survey show that after time for leisure activities, time with partner, children, friends and family were the most cited reasons for employees wanting to work less.[14,15]

Other evidence

The evidence cited within the *Foresight Challenge Reports* focus mainly on the importance of social networks as a buffer against mental ill health. Research has also found that happy people have stronger social relationships than less happy people.[16] While the causality of this effect may be difficult to determine, studies from social capital research suggest that social networks promote a sense of belonging and well-being.[17] A recent study using data from the *German Socio-Economic Panel Survey* showed that life goals associated with a commitment to family, friends, social and political involvement promoted life satisfaction.[18] In contrast, life goals associated with career success and material gains were detrimental to life satisfaction.[19] In light of these findings, the effect could be mediated by stronger social relationships in the former group.

Rationale for inclusion

Since the evidence indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world, the idea of connecting with people seems key to any set of actions. It seems apparent that the composition of social networks is likely to be very different between individuals and within individuals across time.

A person may have a broad social network, socialise with lots of people, but their relationships may not be close or may lack depth. Equally, a person may have strong social relationships but have few connections with people outside of their core network. Strong social relationships are supportive, encouraging, and meaningful. Broader, more 'superficial' relationships are important for feelings of connectedness, familiarity and sense of self-worth associated with an individual's position in a community. The key message to communicate is that giving time and space to both *strengthen* and *broaden* social networks is important for well-being.

Be active…

Go for a walk or run. Step outside. Cycle. Play a game. Garden. Dance. Exercising makes you feel good. Most importantly, discover a physical activity you enjoy; one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Evidence from the Foresight Challenge Reports

Regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of well-being and lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.[20] It is not clear, however, if regular exercise has a direct influence on feelings of well-being or whether well-being is a determinant of regular exercise behaviour.

However, in the case of children, at least, it has been argued that 'action is central to cognition'.[21]

Longitudinal studies provide some evidence to indicate that physical activity protects against cognitive decline in later life and against the onset of depressive symptoms and anxiety.[22] In some cases, intervention studies have shown that exercise can be effective as a means of treatment, although the report concludes that little research has been carried out to examine how to achieve sustained changes in lifestyle, particularly where maintaining physical activity is concerned.[23]

Although studies indicate that the physical activity need not be particularly vigorous, at least in the protection of mental capital, not enough is known about what type (aerobic or anaerobic), frequency, intensity or duration of exercise is effective in improving well-being.[24] Research is beginning to examine the mediating factors in the effects of physical activity on well-being. Some studies have focused on the biophysical responses to exercise, while others have focused on the psychosocial mechanisms. For example, engagement in physical activity is thought to be beneficial to well-being by providing increases in perceived self-efficacy, a sense of mastery and a perceived ability to cope. It also detracts from negative thoughts.[25]

Other evidence

While some evidence suggests that public health guidelines for moderate physical activity three to five times a week must be met for existing depression symptoms to be significantly reduced,[26,27] mood and affect have been shown to be improved by as little as single bouts of exercise of less than 10 minutes.[28,29] The implication of these findings is that small changes in activity levels of sedentary or elderly people will enhance well-being.

Rationale for inclusion

While the evidence base is still developing, it seems that an overall consensus has emerged about the importance of exercise for well-being. It seems to be essential for people at all ages, both as a mechanism for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being. Physical activity does not necessarily need to be particularly intense for feeling good. Slower-paced activities, like walking, can also have the benefit of encouraging social interactions at the same time, for example. The messaging will encourage individuals to consider their own activity and mobility levels in responding to the advice.

Take notice…

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are on a train, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Evidence from the Foresight Challenge Reports

Intervention research has focused on identifying changes to behaviour, which may act as possible mechanisms for promoting personal well-being.[30] Research has shown that being trained to be aware of sensations, thoughts and feelings for 8 to 12 weeks has been shown to enhance well-being for several years.[31] The Pennsylvania Resiliency Programme is based on cognitive behavioural therapy techniques and has been developed for primary school children.[32] It has been applied in schools in three counties in the UK as part of the Young Foundation's *Local Wellbeing Project*.[33]

Other evidence

Being in a state known as mindfulness ('the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present') has also been shown to predict positive mental states, self-regulated behaviour and heightened self-knowledge.[34] Self-determination theory suggests that an open awareness is particularly valuable for choosing behaviours that are consistent with one's needs, values and interests.[35] This self-regulatory behaviour is thought to be important for well-being.[36]

Rationale for inclusion

Reminding oneself to 'take notice' is a step in the right direction towards strengthening and broadening awareness on an intrapersonal (within person) level. Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances well-being. Interestingly, savouring an experience can help to reinstate life priorities.[37]

Furthermore, heightened awareness enhances an individual's self-understanding and allows an individual to make choices in alignment with his/her own values and intrinsic motivations. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, research into actions that aim to enhance well-being have similarly found that goals for behaviour change need to be aligned with personal values to be successful.[38] The implication of the evidence is that lasting behavioural change can only be achieved if the proposed interventions are somewhat internalised and owned by the individual. Increasing self-awareness by 'taking notice' may have the added benefit of enhancing this process.

Keep Learning…

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident, as well as being fun to do.

Evidence from the Foresight Challenge Reports

For children, learning plays an important role in social and cognitive development.[39] The continuation of learning through life has the benefits of enhancing an individual's self-esteem, encouraging social interaction and a more active life.[40] Anecdotal evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities helps to lift older people out of depression.[41]

Adult learning has been correlated with positive effects on well-being, reports of life satisfaction, optimism and efficacy.[42,43] While it is unlikely that this relationship works in only one direction, fieldwork studies indicate that participation in lifelong learning serves to positively impact on an individual's well-being and resilience. These effects are mediated by self-esteem, self-efficacy, a sense of purpose and hope, competences and social integration.[44]

The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of well-being. Both observational and experimental research suggests that the promotion of well-being is associated with goal-directed behaviour when the goals are self-generated, approach goals, and congruent with personal values.[45]

Other evidence

It has been suggested that feelings of satisfaction associated with both progress and goal attainment mediate the effects of goal setting on well-being. A recent study has shown that teaching individuals goal setting and planning skills, increases well-being.[46] Participants received three, one-hour, group sessions or completed the programme in their own time. Taking part in the intervention, whether in a group or individually, elevated well-being in comparison with controls who did not receive the intervention. The implication is that goal-setting and planning skills can be learned.

Rationale

While not all learning environments can be said to translate into positive experiences and outcomes for well-being, [47]the activity of learning is itself very important for well-being. Goal-directed behaviour has also been shown to have a positive impact on an individual's well-being, especially when the decision to engage in learning is concordant with intrinsic motivations and values.

Given that extrinsic incentives and pressures can reduce motivation to perform even inherently interesting activities,[48] it is important that the messages around this action appeal to both formal and informal learning, which do not necessarily have instrumental ends (e.g. career progression or attainment of a course certificate).

Give…

Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

Evidence from the Foresight Challenge Reports

Neuroscience has shown that mutual cooperation is associated with enhanced neuronal response in reward areas of the brain, which indicates that social cooperation is intrinsically rewarding.[49] As Professor Kirkwood comments, 'the vast majority of our behaviour is motivated by either obtaining rewards or avoiding punishments which modify behaviour through reinforcement.[50] Appropriate stimulation of this reward system, particularly in early life, contributes to gains in cognitive and social functioning critical for the development of mental capital and well-being. Indeed, the Foresight definition of mental well-being says that it is enhanced when an individual is able to achieve a sense of purpose in society and, thus, contribute to their community. So, helping, sharing, giving and team-oriented behaviours are likely to be associated with an increased sense of self-worth and positive feelings.

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of well-being research. Feelings of happiness and life satisfaction have been strongly associated with active participation in social and community life.[51] For older people, volunteering is associated with more positive affect and more meaning in life,[52] while offering support to others has been shown to be associated with reduced mortality rates.[53]

Other evidence

Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in well-being, compared to control groups.[54]

In an earlier study, Harlow and Cantor found that participation in shared tasks like community service and social life was an important predictor of life satisfaction even after health, self-reported vitality, social support and prior levels of life satisfaction were controlled for.[55] Participation in social life was particularly important for the life satisfaction of retirees. Although, it should be noted that, to this date, there has been little consistency in the

literature regarding the specific aspects of well-being that are enhanced by volunteering and participatory activities or the particular community or voluntary activities that are associated with the most positive effects.[56]

Rationale for inclusion

Evidence suggests that notions of reciprocity and 'giving back' to others promote well-being for people of all ages. Behaviours of this kind can be of particular importance to the development of social cognition in children and young people. For adults, and particularly retirees, giving and sharing are important for defining a sense of purpose in the community and a sense of self-worth.

In devising a set of actions, therefore, it seems important to highlight the connection between an individual's well-being and the well-being of the wider community. By contrast, a set of actions that focuses only on narrow, more inward-looking activities is unlikely to be wholly effective in promoting well-being. Furthermore, giving and sharing have a longer-term, more indirect association with well-being in that these types of behaviour have the potential to lead to new and stronger relationships in the future.

Long-listed actions

The set of five actions discussed above was shaped from a longer list of ideas (see Table 1 in Appendix 2 for more information). Generally, themes were excluded from the short list for three principle reasons:

1. The actions presupposed change at an organisational/societal level.
2. The evidence was not compelling.
3. The theme was not explicitly discussed in the *Foresight Challenge Reports*.

Well-being at work

There is good evidence from the *Well-being and Work Report* to suggest the need for some actions that are specifically focused around working life.[57] Indeed, the effects of unemployment on well-being have been frequently documented.[58,59] Work can be good for us because it promotes social ties and it can provide an arena for meaningful engagement in tasks, from which we derive feelings of self-worth and satisfaction. A whole range of factors are necessary to enhance the benefits of work, however, including reasonable working hours and work load, supportive management, autonomy, job security, concordant values, to name a few.

On looking at possible ways to improve well-being in work, it seemed that the majority of practical actions were aimed at the level of the organisation or the government. We did consider some things that the individual could do; for example, discussing issues that they have about working conditions with their manager. It seemed, however, that the effectiveness of any individual-level actions of this kind would be largely dependent on how these behavioural changes were received by management. Therefore, it is only once a culture of cooperation between employer and employee has been fostered that any guidelines to increasing individual responsibility for

well-being at work will successfully impact on individual well-being. Nevertheless, some of the generic short-listed actions like ‘connect’ and ‘keep learning’ are relevant to the working environment so work-specific language like ‘colleagues’ has been included to highlight this point.

Nutrition

There was wide agreement among Challenge Leaders that a balanced diet is important for well-being. The National Institute for Mental Health in England also lists ‘eating well’ in its framework for improving mental health and well-being in England.[60] However, we chose not to include an action on the theme of nutrition for three reasons.

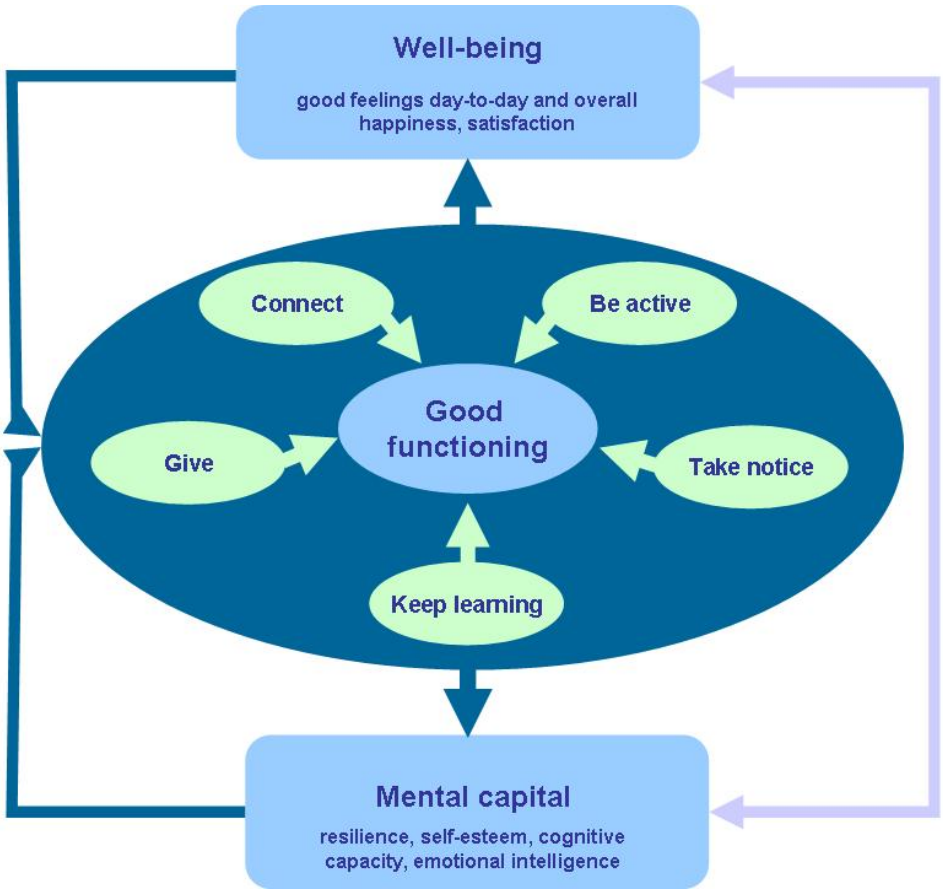
First, the evidence on the role of different nutritional factors is complex so that the direct links between eating well and feeling good remain ambiguous until more research is completed.[61] Secondly, our aim was to choose the most accessible interventions. Therefore, our choices were to some extent dictated by those activities that were not reliant on external resources (like money, access to retail outlets etc) for their user friendly appeal. Thirdly, the UK population has been messaged on healthy eating for the promotion of physical health, so we felt there was less of a priority to raise awareness on this theme.

Nature

The Mental Health Report highlights geographical conditions (urban or rural) as a driver of changes in mental health.[62] Increased urbanisation is highlighted as a risk factor for future trends in mental disorders. Growing evidence suggests that contact with the natural world is also thought to have benefits for mental health.[63] Residential studies in the USA have shown that random allocation of buildings promotes well-being in those participants that are assigned houses close to nature. This supports the hypothesis that green space reduces mental fatigue, ensuring that we are more able to assess and deal with life issues.[64] While this theme was not directly explored in the *Foresight Challenge Reports*, on the strength of research in the field of positive psychology, some indirect references have been made to nature in the ‘be active’ and ‘take notice’ themes.

Actions for change

Figure 1: A model describing how the set of actions operates to enhance well-being.



As the evidence indicates, it is known that each action theme (connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, give) positively enhances personal well-being. The model suggests that following the advice of these interventions enhances personal well-being by making a person feel good and by bolstering his/her mental capital. The actions mainly influence well-being and mental capital by interacting at the level of 'functioning'. They may not be sufficient to denote 'good functioning' in its entirety but, according to the evidence base to date, they play an essential role in satisfying needs for positive relationships, autonomy, competency and security.

The action themes are designed to promote their own positive feedback loops so they reinforce similar and more frequent well-being-promoting behaviours. For example, ‘giving’ by doing something nice for someone will, in most cases, provoke a thank-you, which increases a feeling of satisfaction and the likelihood of doing something nice for someone again. Alternatively, learning something new (like how to cook your favourite food) may lead to a sense of achievement and, as a result, a greater sense of competence and autonomy, which, in turn, leads to feelings of contentment and self-worth. This is reflected in research findings showing that simply having positive emotions changes how people think and behave and enhances psychological resources like optimism and resilience.[65] The feedback loop between well-being and mental capital operates in both directions and represents a multitude of possible relationships between the two. For example, it makes sense that feeling happy can lead to greater resilience or that higher self-esteem leads to greater feelings of satisfaction.[66] As Huppert summarises, ‘positive emotions can lead to positive cognitions which in turn contribute to further positive emotions’.[67]

The aim of this set of actions is to communicate behaviour changes at the *individual* level. They have been formulated to be as accessible as possible to all individuals in the UK population, in trying to overcome both available resources and favourable external conditions (like work, home life and physical health). What this model does not explain is the role of enablers (infrastructure and motivators) at the societal level, which have the capacity to encourage and sustain individual behaviour change.

Critically, each action does not need to be practised in parallel. For example, an individual could ‘be active’ by going for a walk while ‘connecting’ by going for a walk with a friend. They are generic actions that purposefully appeal to as wide a number of people as possible. Yet, at the same time, they can be applied to specific life domains. For example, there is not an action specifically oriented around well-being at work, but an individual could incorporate the advice into their working life by cycling to work, by taking on a new responsibility or by investing some time in relationships at work.

Communicating the messages

Social marketing is a different approach to promoting public health in the UK and has been used to tackle behavioural issues such as healthy eating, alcohol and drug intake, smoking and lack of exercise.[68] Borrowing techniques from the commercial sector, it emphasises knowing your audience and your competition to deliver a highly tailored and customer-focused approach. Friedli outlines some key features of social marketing messaging, which we used as a guide:[69]

- Start where people are.
- Focus on building emotional connections with the target audience.
- Be positive, upbeat and aspirational – selling healthy, satisfied lives rather than 'don't do' messages.
- Exchange – there must be a clear benefit for the 'customer' if change is to occur.

At the very first stages of this project, a long list of actions was generated on thinking around the evidence base, which specified ideas about what people could do to improve their well-being. With such preciseness, however, the approach did not have the flexibility to appeal to a whole population's experiences and interests. Nor did it take into account that each individual approaches marketing messages from a unique starting point. So, the decision was made to group the actions into themes that aimed to be less prescriptive and more universal in appeal. Some of the more specific ideas that made up the long list were added to the explanatory paragraph below each key message. This approach has the benefit of appealing to as wide a number of individuals as possible while offering some tangible ideas to inspire and motivate people.

Actions were framed as approach goals rather than avoidance goals. This presents a more positive picture, especially when communicated in a way that clearly links the proposed action to the prospect of living a happy and fulfilled life. The explanatory paragraph that accompanies each key message should perform this linking role.

The action themes aim to appeal to individuals at all stages in their lives (youth through to old age). Therefore, significant effort was given to getting the language right. For example, evidence has shown that people do not recognise terms like mental health.[70] In order to build a connection with

such a wide-ranging audience, the messages need to be easily understood, yet not too narrow in scope. So, the messages offer a variety of examples, ranging from easy to more difficult, about how an individual might enhance their well-being. After all, if the distance between where a person is and where a health promotion campaign is advising that they be is perceived as too large, there is a risk that the messages will be met with reluctance.

Conclusion

On the available evidence to date, this report has identified five key actions around the themes of social relationships, physical activity, awareness, learning, and giving. In general, the evidence base around the influencers of well-being is growing. Having strong social relationships, being physically active and being involved in learning are all important influencers of both well-being and ill-being. By contrast, the processes of giving and becoming more aware have been shown to specifically influence well-being in a positive way. A combination of all of these behaviours will help to enhance individual well-being and may have the potential to reduce the total number of people who develop mental health disorders in the longer term. However, there is agreement in the *Foresight Challenge Reports* that more work needs to be completed on intervention-based strategies to better understand issues of causality, effect size and favourable conditions for sustainable behavioural change.

The messages identified in this report are intended to have generic appeal, while offering concrete activity-based ideas on how to improve personal well-being. They aim to prompt people into thinking about those things in life which are important to their well-being and perhaps should be prioritised in their day-to-day routines. It is almost certainly the case that people will, to some extent, already be involved in specific activities under the over-arching themes of connecting, being active, learning etc. Rather than encouraging a completely novel set of behaviours, the outcomes of a campaign of this kind are, therefore, more concerned with increasing the time people spend in activities known to enhance well-being.

Appendix 1

Methodology

Foresight contracted **nef** to build on the findings of the summary reviews of the *Mental Capacity and Well-being Project* to develop an evidence-based well-being equivalent of the health promotion dictum 'five fruit and vegetables a day'.

The project was undertaken between April 2008 and May 2008 and comprised two stages:

1. *Review of literature and initial draft list of evidence-based interventions*

    a. A desk-based review of the key challenge area reports:

        Learning through life

        Mental health

        Well-being and work

        Learning difficulties

        Mental capital through life

    b. A review of emerging literature from positive psychology and public-facing reports from third sector organisations on interventions that enhance well-being.

    c. Interviews with the Challenge Leaders in person or by telephone to discuss the evidence base and viable individual-level interventions that will enhance well-being and appeal to a wide audience base.

    d. Interview with Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside. She is an associate editor of the *Journal of Positive Psychology* and researches interventions for improving well-being. She has worked on translating the evidence base into ideas and activities that people can try to improve their well-being in her book, *The How of Happiness*.[71]

    e. Identification of a long list of evidence-based interventions.

2. Messaging and communication

a. Consultation with **nef**'s communications experts to re-draft the list into a communicable set of messages.

b. Consultation with practitioners in the field of mental health promotion.

c. Feedback from Foresight and the Challenge Leaders.

Appendix 2

Table 1: Long list of actions showing how themes have been messaged and how they affect both mental ill-health and well-being.

Intervention theme	Impact		Evidence base		Messaged directly	Messaged indirectly
	Target group	Level	Buffer for mental ill-health	Enhancer of well-being		
Social relationships	Universal	Individual	●	●	Connect	
Physical activity	Universal	Individual	●	●	Be active	
Awareness	Universal	Individual		●	Take notice	
Learning	Universal	Individual	●	●	Keep learning	
Giving	Universal	Individual		●	Give	
Work	Working population	Organisational/ Societal	●	●		Connect Keep learning
Nature	Universal	Individual	●	●		Be active Take notice
Nutrition	Universal	Individual	●			

Endnotes

[1] Huppert F (2008) *Psychological well-being: evidence regarding its causes and its consequences* (London: Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project 2008).

[2] Jenkins R, Meltzer H, Jones P, Brugha T, Bebbington P (2008) *Mental health and ill health challenge report* (London: Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project, 2008) p8.

[3] Huppert (2008) *op. cit.*

[4] Ibid.

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