PERMA+ Model

Idea In Short

Everybody wants to lead a happier life. Our mood shapes so much of our lives, from our relationships, workplace productivity, motivation, and our outlook to life. The PERMA+ Model can help you flourish in life, and it can benefit businesses too. The PERMA+ Model represents the five core elements of happiness and well-being.

Revered American psychologist and educator Dr. Martin Seligman designed the PERMA+ model. As a psychology practitioner, Seligman understood individuals' natural to seek what made them happy, despite their age, orientation and status in life.

In 1998, Dr. Martin Seligman used his inaugural address as the incoming president of the American Psychological Association to draw focus to studying what is good and positive in life from traditional mental illness and pathology. Since, theories and research examined positive psychology interventions that help make life worth living and how to define, quantify, and create well-being

PERMA+ Model

According to the PERMA+ Model, the essential components required to live a happier, well-rounded life are:

- Positive Emotion
- Engagement
- Relationships
- Meaning
- Accomplishments

According to PositivePsychology1, these five components include both eudaimonic and hedonic aspects. According to research, there are positive associations between the

PERMA+ components and satisfaction in life, work and our physical health. These aspects also encourage greater commitment within organizations. The Plus(+) in the acronym represents physical activity, sleep, nutrition, and optimism. These elements that work in tandem with our psychological health and are just as important to our well-being.

Positive Emotion

Positive emotionPositive emotion is much more than mere happiness. Positive emotions include hope, interest, joy, love, compassion, pride, amusement, and gratitude. Positive emotions are a prime indicator of flourishing, and they can be cultivated or learned to improve well-being. 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.

Increasing positive emotions helps individuals build physical, intellectual, psychological, and social resources that lead to this resilience and overall well-being. Ways to build positive emotion include:

- Spending time with People you care about
- Doing activities that you enjoy [hobbies]
- Listening to uplifting or inspirational music
- Reflecting on things you are grateful for and what is going well in your life

Engagement

According to Dr. Seligman, engagement is

> being one with the music

It is in line with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow. Flow includes the loss of self-consciousness and complete absorption in an activity. In other words, it is living in the present moment and focusing entirely on the task at hand. Flow, or this concept of engagement, occurs when the perfect combination of challenge and skill / strength is found.

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. 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 include:

- Participating in activities that you really love, where you lose track of time when you do them
- Practicing living in the moment, even during daily activities or mundane tasks
- Spending time in nature, watching, listening, and observing what happens around you
- Identifying and learning about your character strengths, and doing things that you excel at

Positive Relationships

Relationships encompass all the various interactions individuals have with partners, friends, family members, colleagues, bosses / mentors / supervisors, and their community at large. Relationships in the PERMA+ model refer to feeling supported, loved, and valued by others. Because humans are inherently social creatures, the model includes relationships.

Social connections become particularly important as we age. The social environment plays a critical role in preventing cognitive decline. Strong social networks contribute to better physical health among older adults.

Many people aim to improve relationships with those they are closest to. Sharing good news and celebrating success fosters strong bonds and better relationships. In addition, responding enthusiastically to others, particularly in close or intimate relationships, increases intimacy, well-being, and satisfaction. To build relationships:

- Join a class or group that interests you
- Ask questions to 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

Meaning

Another intrinsic human quality is the search for meaning and the need to have a sense of

value and worth. Dr. Seligman discussed meaning as belonging and / or serving something greater than ourselves. Having a purpose in life helps individuals focus on what is really important in the face of significant challenge or adversity. Personal values guide the sense of meaning. People who have a sense of purpose in live longer, have greater life satisfaction and enjoy fewer health issues.

Having meaning or purpose in life is different for everyone. A profession, social or political cause, creative endeavor, or a religious / spiritual belief may deliver a sense of meaning and purpose. Some may find their sense of meaning and purpose through career, extracurricular, volunteer, or community activities. To build meaning:

- Get involved in a cause or organization that matters to you
- 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

Accomplishments / Achievements

Accomplishment in PERMA+ is also known as achievement, mastery, or competence. A sense of accomplishment is a result of working toward and reaching goals, mastering an endeavor, and having self-motivation to finish what you set out to do. This contributes to well-being because individuals can look at their lives with a sense of pride.

Accomplishment includes the concepts of perseverance and having a passion to attain goals. But flourishing and well-being 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.

Achieving such intrinsic goals as growth and connection leads to larger gains in well-being than external goals such as money or fame. To build accomplishments:

- Set goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, And Time-Bound)
- Reflect on past successes
- Look for creative ways to celebrate your achievements

The Plus (+) in PERMA+

Optimism

Optimism is a positive emotion critical to building resilience and well-being. Optimism is the belief that life will have more good outcomes than bad. People who are optimistic are more likely to be resilient to stressful life events. Optimistic people tend to live longer, have better postoperative outcomes and lower levels of depression, and adjust better to college life.

Physical activity

Physical activity has been linked to well-being in numerous ways. Negative emotions are associated with an increased risk of physical disease and poor health habits, and people with mental illness are more likely to be physically inactive.

There are obvious physical benefits to being active, but increasing movement or activity also decreases symptoms of depression, anxiety, and loneliness and improves mental focus and clarity.

Nutrition

Poor nutrition leads to physical health problems such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and even cancer, but there is significant research demonstrating a relationship between diet and mental health. Eating a balanced diet rich in vegetables and nutrients (and limiting processed or sugary foods) has been associated with well-being. High levels of well-being were reported by individuals who ate more fruits and vegetables (Stranges et al., 2014). A review of research on children and adolescents found that a poor diet (high levels of saturated fat, refined carbohydrates, and processed foods) was linked to poorer mental health.

So what should we eat? There are many super foods found in nature, such as berries, cruciferous vegetables, avocados, nuts, and seeds. A Mediterranean diet that is high in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, beans, cereals, grains, fish, and unsaturated fats has been shown to reduce depression symptoms and provides an array of physical health benefits.

Sleep

Neuroimaging and neurochemistry research suggests that good sleep hygiene fosters mental and emotional resilience, and sleep deprivation leads to negative thinking and emotional vulnerability. Further, sleep problems are more likely to affect people with psychiatric disorders and may increase the risk of developing mental illness. Particularly, insomnia increases the risk of developing depression.

Harvard Medical School recommends getting seven to nine hours of quality sleep during the same hours every night. Lifestyle changes such as avoiding caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol, getting physical activity, decreasing screen time, and using the bedroom only for sleep and sex can improve sleep quality.

Relaxation techniques and cognitive behavioral techniques to reduce stress and anxiety can also be effective ways to improve sleep and overall well-being.

Business impact

PERMA+ is more than the building blocks for achieving a happier, more balanced life, but it can also serve as a predictor of psychological distress, such as burnout and anxiety. For businesses, this is a huge benefit, since burnout and mental health problems can impact productivity and morale among employees.

Increasing PERMA+ among colleagues can help to improve their experiences at work. Well-being is founded on the ability to access a wide range of emotions, and being able to identify positive emotions is essential to fostering better relationships with other members of the team, increasing retention and finding meaning in the work you do.

Sometimes, it takes time and effort to notice those emotions, but PERMA+ encourages staff to notice them when they may be hidden under the demands of a busy workday, creating better experiences for colleagues in the workplace and more positive outcomes for the business overall.

When you have a more optimistic outlook and can find meaning in your work, you can create a better connection with your teammates and with clients and customers. It enables staff to deliver better performance by inspiring engagement and encouraging people to take more chances, which is better for individuals but also for the organization as a whole 2:

> Overwork is a main cause of burnout, even if you're not personally going through burnout, the numbers indicate that most people work with those who are. By compensating for your colleagues' exhaustion, you may be at risk of developing the same condition.

By increasing happiness and well-being among staff, businesses can help to alleviate stress, burnout and anxiety, creating a happier and more efficient workforce.

PERMA+ in practice

There are several ways that individuals can achieve PERMA+ in their lives. Setting goals is crucial to help you not only stay on track, but also understand what it is you're working towards. Document the accompanying emotions you feel when you achieve these goals, as you want to note the activities you enjoy and that put you in a flow state, as these are the tasks that will make you happiest over time.

Doing the things you enjoy, day after day, will boost positive emotions, lower stress and keep you engaged, but they'll also be tasks where you'll value your accomplishments because you'll be working on things that truly matter to you. Keeping a gratitude journal can also help you to note down the positive emotions you feel throughout the day and the tasks or relationships you value that make you feel good in yourself and your abilities.

When applying PERMA+ to your relationships, focus on cultivating authentic relationships with colleagues. This can create a happier association with work but also helps you to cope more effectively with stress. Arrange lunches or coffee breaks regularly with your colleagues and reach out to see how they're doing.

You also want to get meaning and purpose from the work that you do, which provides greater professional satisfaction and is your drive to get up and come to work every day. This can be achieved by stepping outside of your comfort zone and identifying the values you're aligned with at work. You can also get value and a sense of purpose from helping others, whether that's working on team tasks more often, mentoring people or reaching out to help people you can see are struggling.

Manager support

Managers can create positive emotions and a sense of well-being centered on equipping staff with the tools and the systems to help them move through their workday more positively and constructively. There are several ways that employers can assist staff, such as providing flexible work hours, understanding the challenges that employees face, such as balancing childcare with work responsibilities and developing more inclusive workplaces.

Leaders should also focus on talent development to map out what makes each member of the team flourish and come to work motivated and encouraged, rather than stressed and overwhelmed. Everyone is different, so tailoring the way tasks are designed to suit individuals and how they work best can effectively boost engagement and make it easier for staff to accomplish their goals. Check-in with your team regularly to understand their motivations and help them feel valued, but also to identify the areas where they feel negative so that you can work together to make changes.

Businesses need to articulate their mission and the targets they're working towards, to help staff understand what it is they're working for and to foster a collaborative culture in the workplace. Communication is critical to creating a healthy, happy work culture. In fact, research has shown that when mutual respect, honest feedback and openness was encouraged at work, staff were 80% more likely to cite higher emotional well-being. Leaders can also do more to focus on the Plus of The PERMA+ Model, such as allowing flexible hours to help people to balance work and home life more easily, implementing wellness programmes and encouraging exercise through workplace initiatives.

Role-modelling and positivity

Leaders can lead by example, providing a role model for other team members when it comes to making well-being a focus. It's very difficult to foster your staff's well-being if you're not focusing on your own, so consider the ways that you can put the proverbial oxygen mask on first before helping others.

For example, are you:

- Making time to exercise by walking to meetings and making sure you take a full lunch break to eat a healthy meal rather than snacking at your desk?
- Setting clear boundaries between work and home life, leaving the office at a reasonable hour?

These examples are important for staff to see, so they can feel that they can implement them in their own life.

Leaders should also make space for the positive in every day, whether that's creating space for positivity and celebrating the successes in their own life and the lives of the people around them, or focusing on solutions to situations rather than simply jumping to blame and victimizing.

- Is team performance focused on celebrating achievements and encouraging employees to aim higher?
- Are the strengths and skills of the team focused on, rather than areas that need improvement?

These actions can help to create a culture of positive well-being within the team and encourage everyone to consider how they can implement the principles of PERMA+ into their lives more regularly.

Summary

Life, Liberty and the Pursuit Of Happiness is embodied in United States' Declaration of Independence. Humans have strived towards the Pursuit Of Happiness since the beginning of time. Yet the concept of happiness is very hard to accurately define and quantify. Each of the pillars of The PERMA+ Model contributes to greater well-being in both your personal and professional life and each should be pursued for its own sake. By focusing on each component independently, you'll benefit more widely. For leaders, considering the PERMA+ Model when managing staff can help in creating a more positive and engaged team.