



# The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Improving our health and happiness  
for better work, life, and play.



Juice.

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## Rob Baker

Rob is a specialist in positive psychology. He has a Masters of Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Melbourne and his research on how people can bring their whole and best selves to work has been presented at academic and professional conferences in the UK and internationally.

Rob has been putting the “Human” back into Human Resources as a senior leader for large employers in both hemispheres. It’s from this work that he now engages with employers across multiple sectors through his workplace consultancy, Tailored Thinking. Whilst working with executives, managers, their teams, and through his personal study and research, Rob draws inspiration from helping others to find meaning in their work and happiness in all that they do.

An avid runner, Rob has competed on the international stage, having represented Great Britain in mountain running and orienteering and has achieved a top 40 finish at the London Marathon. These days, Rob runs and cycles purely for fun and reflection, and enjoys outdoor misadventures with his young family.



## Gary Butterfield

Gary is an alumnus of the University of Leeds and Executive Director at Everyday Juice Limited (EJL), a subsidiary company of The University of Sheffield. Gary spent a decade working within the health and fitness industry before co-founding Juice at the University.

Through EJL, Gary takes his passion and expertise for health and wellbeing to employers big and small, creating remarkable places to work with healthy and happy people. He works with organisations across a range of sectors including Higher Education, Further Education, NHS Trusts, Legal and Accountancy Firms, Public Sector organisations, and a selection of SMEs based around the UK.

Gary practises what he preaches. When he’s not advising organisations on all things health related, he’s in training for a range of personal challenges. A keen cyclist, in December 2014, Gary completed his first Ironman Triathlon in Western Australia, and is currently planning a 1,200-mile cycle ride around Iceland in 2019. When not doing something silly, you can usually find him out on his bike, running, swimming, or picking up something heavy; sometimes all at once!

## Welcome

This paper shares a series of short articles, which have a focus on developing and promoting our wellbeing. The paper is themed around the “Five Ways to Wellbeing” developed by the New Economics Foundation.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are an evidence-based collection of behaviours and actions, which are associated with positive health and wellbeing.

## What is “wellbeing”?

Ask someone what their hopes are for themselves, their friends, and family, and they will often reply ‘health and happiness’. Ask them the best way to achieve this and they often struggle. This is neither surprising nor new.

Thinkers and scientists have been exploring the concepts of health and happiness for thousands of years. Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, were some of the first to consider the make-up and markers of a fruitful and fulfilling life.

We all have a sense of our own wellbeing, whether that’s cognitive or physical, but sometimes we need that extra bit of support or a gentle nudge in the right direction to look after ourselves and keep well. Simply put, wellbeing can be thought of as how we feel and how we function.

People who report high levels of wellbeing are often described as thriving and flourishing. Feeling well and functioning strongly is associated with positive cognitive states such as happiness and curiosity, strong social and work relationships, and having a sense of meaning and purpose. Those who have high levels of wellbeing are often also found to be more buoyant and resilient to life’s challenges when they present themselves both at home and at work.



## The Five Ways to Wellbeing

There is no single measure that can be used to define wellbeing. Our health and happiness is influenced by a range of different factors and not surprisingly, if we are looking to improve our wellbeing, experts suggest we consider a range of activities. Research in the fields of happiness and wellbeing is ever growing, informed by experts in the fields of economics, behavioural science and positive psychology.

The “Five Ways to Wellbeing” have been developed to support people to improve their health and happiness. The five strands were developed by the New Economics Foundation and are based on an extensive review of actions people can take that are positively associated with cognitive health and wellbeing. The five individual strands are: Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning, and Give.

Wellbeing, as with most things in life, does involve some form of action. Making any lasting change to our life requires tenacity and commitment, but this doesn’t necessarily have to mean hard work and struggle.

The secret to developing lasting positive behaviours is finding activities and ways of living that you find enjoyable and stimulating.



## Connect

The frequency and quality of our connections with those around us, including family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours, have a profound impact on our health and happiness.

It is in the company of others that we often experience pleasure, share jokes and joy, are given companionship, support, love and kindness. Strong social networks not only foster our wellbeing, but also can act as a buffer against stress and anxiety.

The relationship between wellness and social relationships is not such a surprise when you consider that as a species we are hard-wired to inter-connect. We have a biological need for social interaction and each time we positively interact with someone, the pleasure-inducing hormone oxytocin is released. This has a number of biological benefits, including reducing anxiety and improving focus and alertness.

The greater the quality, frequency and length of the connections we make the better we tend to function. This is applicable to all aspects of our lives, including work. In fact, improving our interactions with others at work may be one of the best ways to reduce our levels of stress and improve our wellbeing.

# In practice...

# 1

## Give your complete focus and attention

Stop what you are doing and take a moment to make eye contact and focus intently on what someone is saying. Now this may seem incredibly straightforward, which it is, but all too often we float through interactions without giving people our true focus and attention.

# 2

## Respond actively and constructively

When someone shares good news, be interested, curious and engaged. Ask positive questions. When we communicate actively, it shows our engagement and interest. Being positively curious in what someone is saying has been shown to foster appreciation and a sense of connection when compared with other more neutral conversational styles.

# 3

## Say thanks - genuinely

Giving thanks and practicing gratitude benefits not only you, but also those around you. Showing appreciation has been found to directly improve levels of positivity and the quality of relationships in the workplace. Generosity and gratitude is contagious - by giving sincere thanks and appreciation to a colleague, you in turn may inspire your colleague (or your colleague's colleague) to say thanks to others.

## Take Notice

Whilst we might physically keep our eyes open for (most) of our waking day, how much of our time would we describe as being totally focused? For the majority of us, we find our attention increasingly splintered and split. Often between screens, activities, and tasks.

Staying focused on a task, for sustained periods of time, is increasingly an accomplishment. At work it is easy to be seduced by the comfort of “being busy” or the stimulation (and distraction) that our computers, smart phones and other devices provide us.

The science of staying present and focussed is compelling and strong enough to convince even the most ardent multi-tasker or smart phone addict to, literally, stop what they are doing.

Mindfulness is one approach that encourages people to deliberately take notice of their environment, thoughts, and emotions. Mindfulness practice has been shown to be significantly related to increased feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, and overall wellbeing. It has also been shown to buffer against the development of depressive symptoms and the treatment of mild depression.

Spending time deliberately being present and in the moment also allows us to savour, which allows us to notice and appreciate the positive aspects of our lives. It allows us to prolong and enrich specific experiences, such as the taste of our food or an immersion in nature.

As with mindfulness, research has identified a myriad of benefits of savouring. These include: improved physical and psychological wellness, and being a more creative and agile problem solver.

# In practice...

# 1

## Take cognitive pictures

Once a day, make time to slow down and focus on your surroundings to enable you to remember them later. This might include the laughter of a friend or colleague, the petals of a flower, or the formation of clouds outside your home.

# 2

## Pick-apart a daily activity

Focus on an activity which you do each day, such as drinking your first cup of coffee, taking a regular walk, doing the dishes, or brushing your teeth. Challenge yourself to spend just one minute absorbed in nothing else but that activity.

# 3

## Become a uni-tasker

Rather than splitting your attention across a variety of activities (often referred to as multi-tasking), deliberately try to take on tasks one at a time. Attempting to rapidly perform multiple tasks and switching from one task to another has consistently been shown to be less efficient and require more cognitive energy than precisely and consciously tackling tasks one at a time.

## Keep Learning

The perception that as we get older we can't easily learn new skills and abilities has been around for a long time. Centuries in fact. The adage, "you can't teach old dogs new tricks" is one of the oldest recorded and can be traced as far back as the 16th century.

Recent neurological and behavioural science has debunked this myth; we actually have the ability to learn new skills and abilities throughout our lifetime. Encouragingly, adult learning has been positively linked with overall measures of wellbeing – our ability to feel good and function well. Neuroplasticity describes our brain's capacity to change and adapt throughout our lifetime. We now know that focused and deliberate learning and practice challenges our brains to develop new, and reinforce existing, neurological pathways.

This adaption has been seen in action by researchers. Using MRI scans to monitor the brains of 79 taxi-driving trainees and 31 control members, researchers at University College London (UCL) were able to identify structural changes in the brain amongst those drivers who successfully passed the 'Knowledge' – the test required to navigate routes around London by memory.

Unfortunately, it is not yet possible to use MRI scanners to explain the positive association between learning and wellbeing, life-satisfaction, and optimism. Social scientists have however developed a number of compelling and well-regarded explanations for these phenomena.

Humans have a natural desire to grow and progress. Tackling novel tasks, achieving self-generated goals, and successfully learning new skills can give us a sense of mastery, which in turn can boost our self-confidence and self-esteem. Both observational and experimental research studies have shown that the development of new skills, particularly if they are linked to, or support our values and interests, can help promote a sense of purpose and help connect us with others.

# In practice...

# 1

## Do a familiar task differently

Reflect on some of your traditional ways of working and invest time in learning to do a regular task differently. This might include using a software package for a presentation, compiling a report using a different style of format, or contributing and sharing your ideas in meetings in a different way.

# 2

## Get into the detail

Undertake a deep analysis of an area of interest to you in your work. This could include exploring the background to a policy, political, or legislative change which may impact on your work, learning more about a current or potential customer, or uncovering new techniques to lead and motivate.

# 3

## Lunch and learn

Use a lunch break to learn a new skill or activity. The possibilities are as broad as creativity and curiosity will allow. Learn to sing, be more mindful, play an instrument, or learn a language. Activities through Juice provide a great starting point for some ideas.

## Be Active

Reasons to be active are abundant. Regular activity can give us a sense of joy, pride, playfulness, community, absorption, and of course, fun.

Historically, the advantages of exercise were often thought of in terms of physical benefits (such as reductions in the risk of developing obesity, cardiovascular disease, a stroke, and high blood pressure to name a few). Over the last decade there has been greater exploration and understanding of how regular activity positively improves our neurological function, mood, and overall wellbeing.

The benefits of regular activity include: protecting from, and alleviating against, depression, anxiety, and stress; reducing symptoms of tiredness and fatigue; clearer thinking; and enhancing mood and creating a sense of calm. These benefits can be explained by a blend of biological, neurological, and motivational factors.

Activity, particularly of a physical nature, changes our brain chemistry through the release of endorphins (often referred to as 'feel good' hormones) and other neurological chemicals. These have a number of positive benefits including calming anxiety and lifting mood.

Achieving goals and developing, learning, and becoming absorbed in new skills has been positively linked with high levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.

So what stops us being active? The most commonly given answer to this question is a lack of time and/or energy, which is understandable in the fast-paced world we live in.

However, maybe we need to switch our thinking.

Our personal investment in exercise may actually help us achieve more in the time we have, increase our moods, and our energy levels – counteracting and overcoming the barriers to activity in the first place.

# In practice...

# 1

## Find an activity you like

There are so many ways we can get active based on our own personal time constraints, preferences, and fitness levels. The secret is to find an activity that you enjoy and look forward to; you are far more likely to stick with an activity if you really enjoy doing it.

# 2

## Try temptation bundling

If you genuinely can't get motivated to do an activity, have a think about how else you can incentivise and reward yourself for doing it. Temptation bundling describes pairing rewards and things we value with activities we want, but often struggle, to do. For example, only let yourself watch your new favourite TV programme after you have done your allocated activity.

# 3

## Think about improving your performance

Set yourself the target of getting better at a task, exercise, or activity. Motivational studies have shown that when we set goals and achieve higher levels of competence we are more likely to become absorbed in the task and stick with an activity over time.



## Give

Here's a little secret about giving; it's contagious. Giving back, gifting your time, making donations, showing gratitude, and saying sincere thanks, all have the potential to create a cascade of generosity amongst your friends, at work, and within your local community.

Giving has more benefits than we would immediately imagine. It strengthens social connections, increases feelings of vitality, happiness and general wellbeing, and appears to have the potential to help us live longer. Our benevolent behaviours can cascade to others much more widely than we would ordinarily expect, and certainly beyond the immediate recipient of our original 'gift.' The survival and development of our species could even be linked to our ability to give.

Giving is key to enriching and developing relationships. As social beings, humans appear to have evolved to derive feelings of pleasure, purpose, and self-worth through actively helping others. Pro-social behaviour enables us to form groups, collaborate, and positively interact.

Whilst the exact reason for the positive benefits of giving may not be known, we are starting to get a clearer understanding of the neurobiology associated with altruistic behaviour. In laboratory studies the positive feelings of warmth associated with giving, and witnessing acts of kindness, have been linked to the release of oxytocin.

People who experience a dose of oxytocin have also been found to be more inclined to help others, which may explain why giving has often been described as triggering 'waves' of altruistic behaviour in others. An innovative study by researchers from UCAL and Harvard concluded that one act of generosity could spread by three degrees—from person to person to person to person.

# In practice...

# 1

## A random act of kindness

Once a day for a week carry out a random act of kindness. This could be buying a coffee for the next person in line, bringing treats into the office unexpectedly (or even anonymously), or writing a handwritten note of thanks to a colleague.

# 2

## Gift your time to a colleague

Look for opportunities to give your support to someone else at work. This could include offering to mentor someone, giving detailed feedback on a piece of work/activity, or making time over lunchtime for a chat.

# 3

## Volunteer

Volunteering schemes are a fantastic way of making a positive difference to charitable causes and/or specific groups in your community. A number of workplaces now have volunteering schemes and your employer may even give you paid time off to volunteer.

## The Five Ways to Wellbeing for teams and departments

Meaningful conversations about health and wellbeing don't need to be hard. Being able to talk with others about our cognitive and physical health, including our thoughts and feelings, is a sign of connection and a good attitude towards health and work.

Start with asking a question and listen to how people are feeling, and what is impacting (positively and negatively) on their actions and relationships at work. Other ways of embedding the Five Ways to Wellbeing with your team could be:

- **Take Notice** – Value your team's efforts and hard work; give credit where it's due.
- **Keep Learning** – Create a culture of continual development, where people are offered opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Connect** – Strengthen your relationships and build trust by taking a moment each day to chat with members of your team on a personal and professional level.
- **Be Active** – Schedule your commitments carefully and plan in some time for movement in any way that takes your fancy. The opportunities are as vast as creativity will allow.
- **Give** – Be available and approachable. We're all busy, but have an open door policy where possible so that you're part of the team.

We all need to feel close to other people, and valued by them. At work, having good relationships with colleagues helps us to stay motivated and engaged. Connecting is about being there for others, talking and listening, and feeling a strong sense of belonging.

## Champion the Five Ways to Wellbeing across your organisation

The Five Ways to Wellbeing can support organisations to best meet the needs of their population. Research suggests that those which embrace positive cognitive and physical health yield a greater return on engagement and productivity, but most importantly, foster a more creative, inspired, and buoyant community of happy and healthy people.

Your leaders are the key so tailor the Five Ways to suit where you are, and the resources that you have available. Here are a few pointers:

- **Create a shared sense of purpose** – Clearly communicate your vision for a healthy team or workplace and take your people on the journey with you.
- **Really listen** – Ask your people what they think about the Five Ways to Wellbeing and really take notice and action their feedback.
- **Set clear expectations** – Ask leaders to actively promote and support their teams and departments to participate in the Five Ways.
- **Set the tone** – Champion the Five Ways to Wellbeing through all communications with your people, whether it's through Juice, email, notice boards, social media platforms, or opportunities to speak with colleagues through discussion or participating in events.
- **Lead by example** – Be a role model and introduce the Five Ways to Wellbeing into your own life; take a well-earned break during your day, go for a walk, say thank you, give credit for a job well done, and take notice of your surroundings.

Your teams will be more likely to build the Five Ways to Wellbeing into their days if organisational culture and dynamics support it, which includes policies and practices.



## Tailored Thinking

You have some great people within your organisation, but are they able to thrive and produce their best work? Research suggests that although the best intentions are there, probably not. That's where we come in.

Tailored Thinking is a positive psychology, wellbeing, and HR consultancy. We're a force for good in the world of work and committed to making healthier, happier and higher performing workplaces.

Bringing a positively deviant perspective, informed by wellbeing and behavioural science, we support organisations through workshops, leadership programmes, and the design and delivery of key activities and core strategy.

Our focus is to encourage and enable a positive, personalised, and human approach to work where leaders, teams, and individuals can bring their whole and best selves to the workplace.

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## Everyday Juice Limited

We know that employers care about the health and happiness of their people, but often struggle with innovation, communication, and navigation.

Born at The University of Sheffield and working with universities, NHS Trusts, SMEs, and the private sector, Juice brings an employer's health and wellbeing offer under one easy to navigate online roof whilst delivering a single recognisable identity.

Juice has a bias for action, not only giving employees the opportunity to learn through the weekly updated Health Hub, which is underpinned by the Five Ways to Wellbeing, but to connect with the wider organisation community through regular on-site activities managed by our fully integrated booking system.

We've won loads of awards for what we do, including the Sunday Times Top 100 Health & Wellbeing Special Award.

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