ART MUSEUMS AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WELL-BEING VS. ILL-BEING</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL VS. COLLECTIVE FLOURISHING</th>
<th>FLOURISHING AND THE ARTS</th>
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</table>
| Flourishing can be broken down into two components: high well-being and low ill-being. [1] | Flourishing can be considered at different social levels:  
- **Individual Flourishing** focuses on personal outcomes, such as happiness or sense of meaning.  
- **Collective Flourishing** focuses on communal or social outcomes, such as community cohesion or social justice. | One way of fostering flourishing through the arts is social prescribing, where medical providers write prescriptions for various kinds of social activities, including visits to art museums. Social prescribing can have a variety of positive outcomes, including reducing doctor's visits and decreasing hospital admissions. [2] |

- **High Well-Being** refers to the presence of strengths, meaning, and other positive elements.  
- **Low Ill-Being** refers to the absence of disease, disorder, and other negative elements.  

Millions of people visit art museums each year, and research is beginning to clarify how these visits can increase human flourishing. Flourishing can be understood in terms of high well-being and low ill-being, considered on individual and collective levels, and fostered through specific programs. To learn more, see Cotter & Pawelski (2022), *Journal of Positive Psychology*.  

[www.humanitiesandhumanflourishing.org](http://www.humanitiesandhumanflourishing.org)
# Art Museums and Human Flourishing

A review of current research suggests that art museums can have a significant positive impact on human flourishing by boosting physical and mental health, raising subjective and emotional well-being, and promoting feelings of social connection.

To learn more, see Cotter & Pawelski (2022), *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

<table>
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<th>Physical and Mental Health</th>
<th>Subjective and Emotional Well-Being</th>
<th>Social Connection</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stress:</strong> Visiting art museums can reduce cortisol (a stress hormone) and subjective perceptions of stress. [3]</td>
<td><strong>Subjective Well-Being and Health:</strong> Visiting art museums promotes subjective well-being and strengthens perceptions of health. [6]</td>
<td><strong>Connection:</strong> Art museums can help people feel less disconnected and more equipped to take steps to connect with others. [9]</td>
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<td><strong>Depression:</strong> Engaging in art-viewing and art-making workshops can lessen symptoms of depression. [4]</td>
<td><strong>Quality of Life:</strong> People's perceived quality of life can be boosted through visiting art museums. [7]</td>
<td><strong>Inclusion:</strong> Visiting art museums can make people feel more included and able to form relationships with others with similar interests. [10]</td>
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<td><strong>Dementia:</strong> Regular art museum visitation is related to a lower risk of being diagnosed with dementia. [5]</td>
<td><strong>Emotion:</strong> Art museums can boost positive emotions and a feeling of engagement; visiting them is seen as a positive experience. [8]</td>
<td><strong>Community Building:</strong> Art museums can enhance feelings of community. [7]</td>
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ABOUT THE HUMANITIES AND HUMAN FLOURISHING PROJECT (HHF)

HHF has been part of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania since 2014. Founded and directed by James O. Pawelski, HHF seeks to explore ways in which the arts and humanities relate to well-being through the lens of the Positive Humanities. [11]

To learn about HHF and the Positive Humanities, visit our website.

REFERENCES


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