

Well-being in schools

Ian Morris, Wellington College

Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now,
bump, bump, bump, on the back of his head,
behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows,
the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes
he feels that there really is another way, if only he
could stop bumping for a moment and think of it.
And then he feels that perhaps there isn't.

A.A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh and some Bees

Juvenioia

The (irrational) fear that as soon as our backs are turned...

Our (UK) children are not in crisis.

- Most children aren't depressed (98.6% 11-15, 89% 16-24).
- Most children don't smoke (92% of 15 year olds **not** regular smokers).
- Most children don't drink regularly (82% of 15 year olds).
- Most children aren't regular drug users (88% of 15 year olds in last month).
- 27% of boys and 20% of girls lost their virginity before the age of 16. The median age of first sexual experience is 17.
- The majority of teenagers (80%) used contraception at their first and most recent intercourse.
- Most (70%) said they were neither drunk nor stoned at first intercourse.

What is well-being?

Fruity
120 250ml
£2.50 £3
Orange and passion fruit.
UPPERCASE TEA 250ml
£1.80 £2.50
Fruity
ROBINSONS
MINI FRUIT SHOOT 250ml
£1.50 £2
Apple and blackcurrant. No artificial
colours, flavours, sweeteners or
preservatives.

Well-being
ORGANIC
FRUIT JUICE 250ml
£2.50 £3 40ml
Fresh organic, squeezed Valencia orange
juice or refreshing cloudy apple juice.
LITTLE MIRACLES
GREEN TEA 250ml
£2.50 £3
With green tea and pomelo grapefruit.
THIS WATER 400ml
£2.50 £3
Lemon and lime.



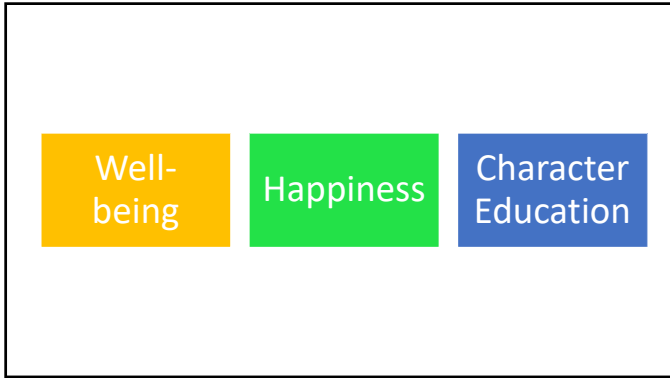




What is well-being?

- *eudaimonia*: being fully what it is to be human; **flourishing**.
- '[Well-being] is a *dynamic* state, in which the individual is able to develop their potential, work productively and creatively, build strong and positive relationships with others, and contribute to their community. It is enhanced when an individual is able to fulfil their personal and social goals and achieve a sense of purpose in their society.'

The Foresight Report: The Government Office for Science: 2008.





Happiness is not a matter of the stuff you have, or whether you are beautiful, healthy, powerful or rich. A happy life is not one in which you just have these things – after all, plenty of people have all these things but in no way live happily. **A happy life is one in which you deal well with these things that you have** – and cope well with illness, poverty, and loss of status, if these things happen to you. Accounts of happiness in this way of thinking are telling us *how to live our lives*, not urging us either to keep or change the circumstances of our lives.

Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*

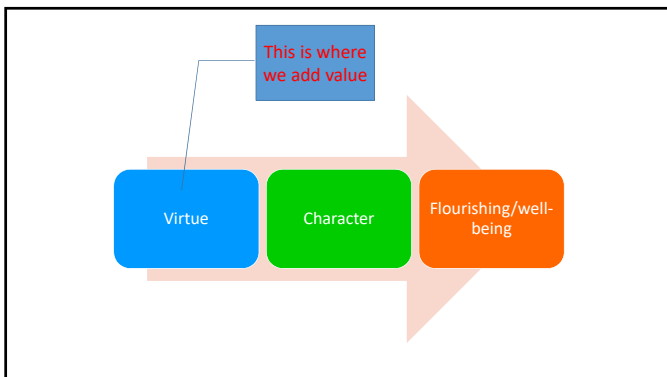
‘There’s just so much pent up energy, like it’s bursting to prove that the bad old days are gone and this is the future of Alfa Romeo. A future that doesn’t have to be propped up by a distant past or *misty eyed nonsense about ‘character’ that really translates as it’s a bit crap, but isn’t it pretty?’*

Jethro Bovingdon, Evo Magazine, describing the Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio

James Arthur

The promotion of character education does not consist simply in the way we teach or in the content of our teaching. Underlying all education we find a **commitment to what makes a good human being and to what constitutes a good society.** The ethics of character focuses upon how individuals are formed as moral agents and this ‘complex’ process is more important than what rules children should necessarily follow or even how they should follow them. **Every school contributes to the development of character in its pupils as does every teacher.**

(This demands belief in the moral potential of the young).

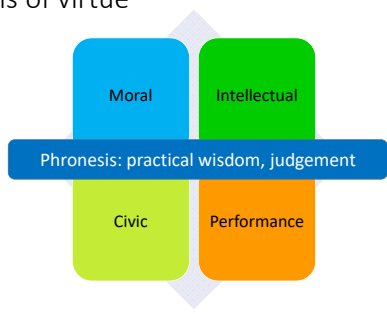


What is a virtue?

'A virtue is a lasting feature of a person, a tendency for a person to be a certain way. It is not merely a lasting feature, however, one that just sits there undisturbed. It is *active*: to have it is to be disposed to act in certain ways. And it *develops* through selective response to the circumstances.' ~ Julia Annas

'The regulation of desire which enables man to live a happy life.' ~ Jonathan Lear

Domains of virtue



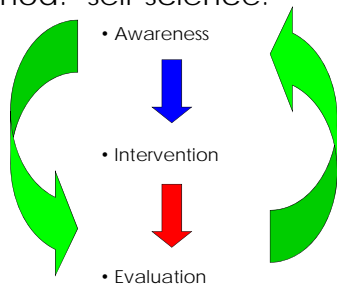
The caterpillar process

1. **Stop.** This involves having the self-control and discipline to pause to assess the situations we find ourselves in. It marks a shift from being carried along by emotions and situations to making deliberate choices.
2. **Notice.** This involves being aware of the events that take place both in the world around us and also in our own interior landscapes. It demands that we always strive to gather as much information as possible to help us to decide well.
3. **Look.** This involves paying attention to our own emotions and the emotions of others. Our emotions provide us with information about what we perceive in situations and also, what others perceive.
4. **Listen.** This involves examining our motivations for acting, the reasons why we are doing what we are doing and the reasons that other people give for their actions. It involves being critical and adjusting our motivations and feelings so that we might do what is good.
5. **Caterpillar.** In *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, the colours of the foods eaten by the caterpillar appear on its wings as a butterfly. In a similar way, our thoughts, speech and actions become our habits and form our character. This part of the process requires the learner to think about the person they are becoming and how their thoughts, speech and actions contribute to that.

Structure.

- Years 9 -12, 1 hour per fortnight; taught by small hand-picked team.
- Visiting speakers/experts.
- Peer education/workshops (e.g. drug/alcohol awareness).
- Stillness/mindfulness on Wednesdays for years 9 and 10.

The method: 'self-science.'



What we teach: The 6 Strands.

- Physical health
- Positive relationships
- Perspective
- Engagement
- The world
- Meaning and purpose

1. Physical health.

We are subject to fundamental laws of nature:
learning to be human again.

- Nutrition.
- Stress.
- Sleep.
- Exercise.
- Neuro-plasticity and learning.
- Resisting temptation/delayed gratification/incentives/nudges.

2. Positive relationships.

- Ethics.
- Emotional awareness and management.
- Listening.
- Friendship.
- Relationships and parenthood.
- Empathy.
- Kindness.
- Trust.
- Resolving conflict.



3. Perspective.

Cognitive skills: building a
psychological immune system.

- Philosophy
- Resilience training
- Mindset
- Self-efficacy



Caution...



Resilience.

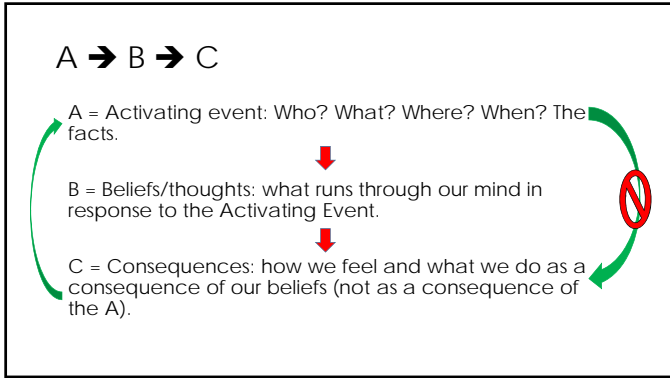
'Who is your enemy? Mind is your enemy.
Who is your friend? Mind is your friend.
Learn the ways of the mind. Tend the mind
with care.' The Buddha

'Men are disturbed not by things, but by their
opinions of them.' Epictetus

'We cling to our beliefs, even when they
drown us.' Jules Evans

Albert Ellis' ABC model.





- Avoiding Thinking Traps: Bs**
- Assumptions/jumping to conclusions
 - Me
 - Always
 - Them
 - Velcro-teflon
 - Negativity bias
 - Catastrophising

'We are by nature question-asking, answer-making, problem-solving animals, and we are extremely good at it, above all when we are little. But under certain conditions, which may exist anywhere and certainly exist almost all of the time in almost all schools, we stop using our greatest intellectual powers, stop wanting to use them, even stop believing that we have them.'

John Holt, *How Children Fail*, p189.

4. Engagement.

- Getting stuck in and staying stuck in.
- Flow and autotelic experiences.
- The seeking mind and curiosity.
- Real-time resilience.
- Harnessing positive emotion.
- Using character strengths to stay engaged.

5. The world.

- Living sustainably.
- The environment.
- Using technology.
- Media literacy: Adbusters.
- Consumerism: maximisers and satisficers.
- Making a positive difference to the world.



- See further The Paradox of Choice by Barry Schwartz and Affluenza by Oliver James.
- www.lifesquared.org.uk

6. Meaning and purpose.



- Viktor Frankl: we must find our own meaning in life.
- Setting a life trajectory.
- Thinking through stages of development and 'mastering the life tasks' (Erik Erikson/George Vaillant).
- Learning from others.
- Applying well-being learning.

What our students say: year 9

'So far this term in well-being we have been learning how to change what we do such as bed times and food consumption to aid our day. We have been set preps that, rather than just answering questions, actually require us to act. For example one of our preps was to change something in our routine and write about how it helped us. Also more recently we have been looking at meditation and how to calm ourselves down when we are stressed or unsure of what to do. I have really enjoyed well-being so far as it is a step away from being an academic subject and more of a lesson where I can improve my day to day life and school work with immediate visible results.'

What our students say: year 10.

'This term in well being we have looked at exercise, sleep, stress, learning and how the media changes our view points on body image. I found it helpful to know that I am not the only one to find certain things stressful and difficult to cope with; this gave me the strength to carry on and fix these things. I have started to go to bed earlier and have noticed a overall change to the way I approach things, I now look with a more optimistic view rather than a pessimistic view. Well being has helped me with my attitude to things, and in turn helped me to achieve things; now I aim higher.'

What our students say: year 12.

'During the duration of this term we have looked at mind traps and ways to handle certain emotions (and how to NOT handle emotion!) I feel that this course has actually been useful as many a time I have used the techniques that we have discussed in class and they have helped me handle certain situations better than I would have previously done. I feel that the class that I am in has helped as they all contribute and provide me with alternate views to my own. Well being is also useful as it gives me a break from main stream academics and makes me concentrate on a different kind of academia and therefore I learn to think in a different way. So overall, I have been pleased with my well being lessons and my progress in the subject as I think it has made me a more rational person.'

It's not just about the students...

'Teachers who are stressed, or demoralised, make poor role models for young people.'

The Foresight Report.

WE ARE ALL TEACHERS OF WELL-BEING

(Whether we like it or not)

<http://wellbeing.wellingtoncollege.org.uk>



Wellington Well-being



This site is the home of the Wellington College Well-being course materials. Use the drop-down menus on the left hand side to access

