



NAPA
National Activity
Providers Association

What is wellbeing?

The two most suggested answers to this question are:

“Being happy”

“Being healthy”

Collins dictionaries define wellbeing as ‘a state of being contented, healthy or successful’.

Oxford dictionaries define wellbeing as: ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy’.

Therefore, the answers given to the question are correct, as far as the dictionaries define it.

But what is *happiness*? Different things make different people happy.

If the two suggestions above are correct, does this mean that every person who does not have *good health*, also does not have wellbeing?

Being *comfortable*, is important to having wellbeing, it suggests any pain the person may have has been managed to the point where they are ‘comfortable’ therefore it will aid wellbeing. It could also mean that the person has sufficient money to meet their needs.

It is safe to say, there is no single definition of wellbeing, because how this is interpreted will depend on the individual, their circumstances, and their priorities.

“For me wellbeing is not about being happy all the time but being able to express a range of emotions and have them responded to – that includes sadness and anger. Of course, if these feelings/emotions are not responded to then that tips into illbeing – I don’t know about you, but I feel great after a good cry – or a good argument!” Hilary Woodhead NAPA’s Executive Director



Wellbeing goes beyond the traditional definition of health. It refers to many varied and interconnected aspects of physical, mental, and social wellness. It includes having choices and participating in activities which are aimed at achieving physical vitality and a mental attitude that is willing and eager to take part in 'life'. Having a sense of wellbeing encompasses being included in social activities and having a sense of social satisfaction and opportunities for achievement, all of which lead to personal fulfilment.

When we think about wellbeing in relation to the Care Act, we must consider it as a broad concept relating to the following areas:

- personal dignity (including treating the individual with respect)
- physical and mental health
- emotional wellbeing, meaning *all* emotions are supported including grief and anger
- protection from abuse and neglect
- control by the individual over their day-to-day life, including over care and support provided and the way they are provided
- opportunity to participate in activities
- social and economic wellbeing
- relationships supported and maintained
- suitability of the individual's living accommodation
- supported to enable the individual's contribution to society

There is no hierarchy in the areas of wellbeing listed above, they all are equally important. Therefore, using a holistic approach to ensure a clear understanding of the individual's views is vital to identifying and defining wellbeing in each case.

Promoting wellbeing involves actively working with the individual, seeking to improve all aspects of wellbeing when carrying out any care and support function. This should apply to any stage of the process from the provision of information and advice to writing and/or reviewing a care and support plan, to providing that support.



As a result of studies and research carried out by Bradford University, they produced a tool for measuring wellbeing. To do this, they had to identify what were the signs that suggested a person had wellbeing and what indicated illbeing (the opposite of wellbeing). They went on to develop a tool and process which is known as Dementia Care Mapping, DCM was developed for measuring the wellbeing of individuals living with dementia. However, the principles of DCM can be used to identify wellbeing, or not, in anybody.

The following is a list of positive behaviours, adapted from DCM, which are helpful in understanding those individuals we are supporting.

Positive behavioural indicators that may be displayed, for example, during a music/singing session.

1 *Shows Enjoyment*

The person shows signs of pleasure, enjoyment or happiness. For example, smiling, moving part(s) of the body to the music, singing or using their voice as an instrument. They may have their eyes closed but are focused on the music, applauding and or making positive comments about the music, songs or people in the activity.

2 *Expresses self and identity and appropriate emotions*

A person may do this through leading a piece of music at the rhythm and tempo of their choice, choosing an instrument for themselves, agreeing or refusing to take part. They may express their likes and dislikes about the music or the songs, or even somebody's voice. They do something that speaks of who they 'are', for example, a piece of music or song may remind them of someone they loved and miss, they may cry, this is an appropriate expression of what they are feeling, it is not a sign of illbeing.

3 *Initiates contact with other people*

The person attempts to make contact with other people, for example by talking, making sounds, waving, touching, using gestures, making eye contact, winking, leaning forward, offering an instrument or holding out their hand. It is not necessary to be able to talk to make contact with others. The person *initiates* contact as well as respond to others.

4 *Shows warmth and affection*

The person shows warmth and or affection towards other people and is responsive when others are warm or affectionate with them. Warmth and affection can be directed towards anyone or anything, including a dead spouse or absent family members, even an object. Words of endearment such as 'like' or 'love', words of positive regard such as 'nice', 'pretty', 'lovely', 'good', 'great' and words of gratitude such as 'thank you' are signs of warmth. Look out for sounds (e.g. cooing and chuckling) and gestures (e.g. holding hands, hugging, stroking, patting, smiling, gazing, kissing, or blowing kisses).



5 *Is cooperative and helpful*

The person volunteers help, may offer an instrument to another person in the group, tries to involve another person who may look as though they are not participating or offers to put a CD in the CD player. They are willing to help when asked or cooperates when others are helping them. Their attempts to help may not always be successful but the intention to help or be cooperative was there.

6 *Can communicate wants, needs and choices*

The person can communicate what they want or need, verbally or non-verbally. They use words or gestures, or both, to ensure those around them understand what they want or do not want. They can challenge someone who is trying to get them to do something they do not want to do, e.g. if they do not want to play an instrument or sing a song, they will let the person know.

7 *Takes the initiative*

The person will do something without being asked. Will try to make contact with others, will lead a piece of music or let the group know what music they want to hear next. Will get up and move around the group or leave the group.

8 *Uses humour*

The person expresses a sense of humour with jokes, comments, or actions, or responds to the humorous comments or actions of others with smiles or laughter. This can include laughter when something goes wrong, for example, somebody dropping an instrument on the floor.

9 *Shows reduced anxiety or agitation*

Whatever signs of anxiety or agitation are usually shown by the person they are reduced during the activity. They may look more relaxed than usual with a calm facial expression and without repetitive movements or sounds.

Conclusion

Wellbeing cannot be summed up as being 'happy' or 'healthy' there is a lot more to wellbeing than that.

Well-being is achieved when we have a sense of *hope* and a sense of *agency*. A sense of agency means feeling that we have control over what we do and what happens to us.

Wellbeing means we have confidence, self-esteem and improved physical health.

When we have wellbeing, we know who we are, and we can express our 'self and identity'. Our culture, traditions, and language are the *foundations* upon which we **build** our identity. *Our experiences* help to **form** our identity. To maintain identity an individual needs to be supported, through meaningful activity and engagement, to reflect and process their life, including their achievements, but also their disappointments and losses.

Very often there is a desire to stop a person from recalling sad memories, because we want them to be happy, but to have wellbeing, we need to recall all parts of our lives and allow appropriate emotions to be expressed.

Supporting individuals with meaningful activity and engagement will have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

