



**WORLD  
VALUES  
DAY**

## **Values and Wellbeing**

**Charles Fowler at the**

**World Values Virtual Knowledge Cafe**

**15<sup>th</sup> October 2019**



**THE TOP 16 SECRETS TO ACHIEVING WELL-BEING HAVE BEEN REVEALED – AND THEY’RE REALLY EASY!** “New research has revealed these top tips for making sure you achieve the best possible well-being” *Daily Mirror (UK newspaper) 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018*

- 1. Put on background music**
- 2. Stroke a cat**
- 3. Buy a friend a coffee**
- 4. Exercise with friends**
- 5. Paint your bedroom**
- 6. Read a novel**
- 7. Write a letter**
- 8. Smile at three people on your way to work**
- 9. Upgrade your knickers**
- 10. Choose vanilla yoghurt**
- 11. Eat more fruit and veg**
- 12. Go skiing or snowboarding**
- 13. Light a fire**
- 14. Go out into nature**
- 15. Take a supplement**
- 16. Take a salt bath**



## What is wellbeing?

- Wellbeing is usually defined as a feeling of pleasure - something nice has happened and life is going well. This is the kind of wellbeing that the Daily Mirror and the rest of the media tend to talk about.
- This sort of wellbeing is fine, but fleeting. True wellbeing is something more sustainable: the feeling of living a life full of purpose, meaning and fulfilment.
- How do we find and sustain that purpose/meaning/fulfilment? By deciding what our core values are, and living our lives with them.
- Does it matter which values? The science says **intrinsic values** (e.g.compassion and generosity, which are good in themselves), impact us far more powerfully than **extrinsic values** (which are valued for the benefits they bring). (*Lekes, Hope et al 2012*).
- Aristotle calls this sustainable kind of wellbeing "eudaimonia": living a virtuous life, doing what is worth doing.



## What else does the science say?

- There is now a huge body of recent science which clearly shows the connection between values and wellbeing. Among the key findings:
- Stress occurs when we compromise our values, for instance when doctors can't treat their patients properly (Losa Iglesias et al, 2012)
- Just affirming our values substantially reduces our neuroendocrine (cortisol) and psychological responses to stress (*David Creswell et al, University of California, 2005*).
- It also reduces perceptions of threat and our defensive responses to threat (*Keough, 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002; Steele, 1988, Nelson & Steele, 2000*), and reduces psychological effects of failure (*Koole, Smeets, van Knippenberg, & Dijksterhuis, 1999*).
- Giving to others actually increases wellbeing even more than giving to ourselves (*Dunn, 2008*)
- Practising or **even witnessing** values like compassion and kindness produces oxytocin which lowers blood pressure, improves overall heart-health, reduces stress, and increases self-esteem and optimism (*Hamilton, 2011; Esch & Stefano, 2011*).

**So intrinsic values are not only good for you, they are contagious.**

## **Conclusion: Values are central to wellbeing**



- If our thoughts, words and actions are aligned to our values, then our mental and emotional, and physical wellbeing benefit. People around us will also benefit – a ripple effect.
- However, if they are not aligned to the way we behave, then we become stressed and our wellbeing suffers.
- The “wellbeing industry” certainly promotes things that can genuinely increase wellbeing – look after your body, try to reduce stress, spend time with friends etc.
- But these have only a temporary impact, unless driven by strongly held values – you could say they are “Band-Aid solutions”.
- But if we live a purposeful, values-based life “doing what is worth doing” our wellbeing will largely take care of itself. Aristotle was right: values are the key to sustainable wellbeing.



**THANK YOU EVERYONE**

**DON'T FORGET WORLD VALUES DAY**

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