

Nourishment

Life can seem full of things that ask something of us. Full of things we need to do...demands, pressures, stress, stuff we get caught up in. Not all of it is negative, but all these things expend energy.

Over time, too much expenditure in life takes its toll. Things become an effort and we have to call on our inner reserves to mobilise ourselves for another effort just to manage. We can become tired, worn out and depleted. Our health suffers, and we lose joy, happiness and the richness that can be there in life.

Nourishment is the stuff that positively inputs into your life.

The benefits are great. It helps you cope, heal and recover when you're depleted.

When you have fuel in the tank, things go so much better. When you have greater capacity, strength and positive energy to draw on, it means you can bring your best to what you do. With resilience you do much better when things get pressured. With greater fullness, freedom, and joy you live a more expanded life.

These benefits influence not just the present, but the way your life unfolds, and they ripple out to positively touch those you have contact with.

So how do you build more nourishment into your life?

What nourishes us?

Rest – sleep, having a break, stepping back from things, even changing the space you are in. We also need a break from being in one emotional or mental space. We need to have both fast and slow, mental and physical, practical and focussed, and impractical and unfocussed, and both serious and frivolous.

Positive Experiences. Positive experiences nourish us. So often they're seen as the end result and something that we seek, but they're also a vital ingredient. It's the moments that are important, the small little times, and we'll talk more about these later.

Being positively connected. You are connected with others. You are connected to your environment, nature, and with God or a sense of 'something greater'. Connected to yourself, your heart and soul. You know how to care for yourself and respond to yourself in ways that meet your needs in life sustaining and enhancing ways.

Having meaning and purpose. There is an appreciation that you are part of something bigger and that there is value and purpose in what you do and how you live your life. It's about being connected to your values and what's important to you.

When you get lost in something. Sometimes you consciously enjoy what you're doing. With this one It's afterwards where you feel the satisfaction and pleasure. At the time you just get really absorbed in what you're doing, for example, like lost in a good book. Time ceases to exist, slows down, or speeds up. You can also get a sense of flow where you are at one with what you are doing.

Diet and exercise.- looking after yourself physically.

You don't need to have all of these, and most people are stronger in some than others. Knowing what nourishes helps you benefit more from it, and gives ideas of things that could build greater nourishment into your life.

Activities

Notice the things that nourish you. Collect pictures that represent them, journal about them

Draw a picture/put down words that show the nourishment you would like to have.

Do you get adequate sleep, rest, and balance in your life.

What things do you enjoy?

When do you feel positively connected to yourself, others, your environment, nature, God?

When do you get lost in something?

How is your diet and exercise?

Levels of nourishment

Firstly, all nourishment is good and to be enjoyed. By understanding the levels of nourishment it opens the possibility of getting further benefit from the nourishment you receive, and it give you ideas on how to expand nourishment in your life.

Inactive/Understood Wellbeing

This is when you identify that you have wellbeing, but you don't actual feel or experience it. For example in some of the research I have done people might say that their wellbeing is high in regards to connection with their family, yet they may not have had particularly felt that in the last couple of weeks.

This can happen for a whole lot of reasons, and it doesn't mean the wellbeing is not there.

It does mean that you're not tapped in to it.

Surface level wellbeing

This is when you feel good on the surface, but it doesn't get any deeper. You register positive experiences, but they don't get in. It's not heartfelt, or it doesn't light up an inner response. The positive experiences are just interludes, but don't nourish and sustain you.

Often that's because we are in the everyday and caught up in what we have to do, or we have a level of stress that inhibits us feeling the wellbeing at a deeper level. It's a bit like how soil can become water resistant in a dry period. Feels good when it's raining, but it runs off the surface and doesn't penetrate and get to the roots.

An example of Surface Level Wellbeing was when I was walking out of the shops one day and there was a magnificent rainbow. A lot of other shoppers saw it but it hardly registered as they were too busy in the shopping experience, hurrying to get home to do everything that needed to be done. Their response was, if anything, a hurried 'that's nice'. The experience stayed on the surface.

Heartfelt Wellbeing.

Heartfelt Wellbeing is when you have a heartfelt sense of feeling good.

Let's take the rainbow example mentioned in the 'surface level wellbeing' section. Whilst some people hardly registered it, others would stop and you could see in their faces their joy and wonderment on seeing the rainbow. A deeper response was activated than the surface level responders. These people had a heartfelt response.

Barbara Fredrickson, a guru on wellbeing, calls these experiences 'heartfelt positive moments'. They're the times when your heart lights up.

Sometimes it will be 'goose bump' strong with your heart singing, other times it will be quiet and gentle, like a breeze.

Underlying Wellbeing.

Underlying wellbeing is a sustained feeling of wellbeing, that's not a response to something that's happened. You don't feel good *because* of something, though you could come up with lots of reasons why you were in a good space if someone asked.... you just feel good in general. it's your base level of being, and not just "I happened to wake up feeling good this morning" by chance.

Underlying Wellbeing just feels good. It's like having a spring of pure water flow through your experience of life. You experience things with greater richness. Life is in technicolour rather than in washed out colours, or worse still, greys. You naturally have a positive interest in life, and live life fully, but you're not emotionally rigid. You flow through different emotions as life takes its course, but somewhere behind all of that you hold that underlying sense of wellbeing.

And more often than not, because you just feel good, and your 'inner well' is full, you bring that capacity and positive sense of feeling good to your life, your relationships, and your work.

So how do you increase nourishment.

An underlying sense of wellbeing, where you bring to life a positive outlook, feel good, and have emotional reserves to bring to life, is built by accumulating individual heartfelt positive moments.



Heartfelt wellbeing

You see, each moment is more than an individual experience that comes and goes. What happens is that each time you experience these heartfelt moments you are enriched and nourished. It's food for your heart and soul.

The more experiences you have, the more you are enriched and nourished, building and growing your underlying wellbeing.

It sounds so simple, yet many people's lives lack wellbeing because they are not getting the nourishment they need through positive experiences.

Let's look at some examples of what these positive heartfelt moments look like.

These are ones I've experience recently

Listening to the birds as I write this it's just really nice to hear the birds, and morning is my favourite time of day. This morning there was a nice 'reddy' glow as the dawn shone through mist....beautiful!

Warm in bed – Ever had those times when you are in bed, warm, relaxed and oh so comfortable? Or that feeling at the end of a long day when you're tired and it feels so nice to lie down and rest? Love it!

Wonderment when I go for my walk I see the sun on the mountains, the fresh air – combination of awe and appreciation. It's *really* special when I see a platypus.

Writing – ok, at times it's frustrating and incredibly hard work, but I love writing this program, especially when it starts to take shape and my ideas come to fruition, or when I write a sentence that reads well, and knowing the positive difference it will make to people.

Creativity and music – I listened to one of my favourite pieces of music today and it energized and inspired me. I also appreciated the skill of someone who can sing like that.

A smile – I shared a heart warming smile with a stranger in the super market when negotiating our trolleys past each other.

Remembering these positive moments! – it's so nice!

A friend who was there when I needed them – all I can say is thanks.

It's at the heartfelt level where wellbeing creates the most benefits and magic in your life, taking you to greater levels of inner happiness, repairing, nourishing, and resourcing you when you are in a stressed state, and enabling you to be at your best.

Here's some other examples

Having a laugh with someone – you feel happy and energized. You also feel a moment of connection with the other person. (it brings the connection into life, pushes the button)

The warmth of the sun – warms your body and soul

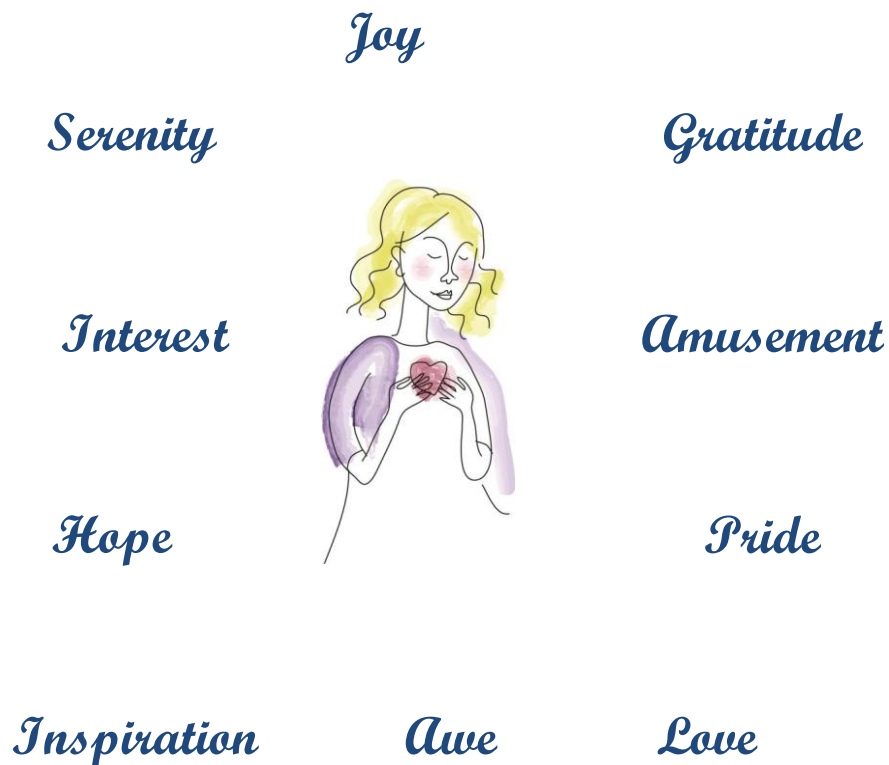
Providing comfort to an upset child - comfort and love, feeling the warmth that comes from the closeness and connection.

And the list could go on and on!

Notice how they vary in size – some are special, some are really small moments in the day. They are all valuable.

Happiness is a wonderful part of wellbeing, but as you can see wellbeing also includes a whole host of other things as well.

Barbara Fredrickson, lists 10 different types of positive experiences. They are



Now it's your turn to have a look at what some heartfelt positive moments are for you. And what's cool is that it's fine to put things down in hindsight, things that you may not have responded to at the time, but looking back you **appreciate now**. The important thing is the heartfelt feeling of appreciation, it doesn't matter what brings it on.

Take a moment.

Think over the last couple of days and make a list of the times that have brought a positive response to your heart. What was the positive responses (it can be more than one)? I've left lots of space so you can keep adding to it over the next couple of days!

If you have trouble remembering the positive times, don't worry, it takes practice. But hey, what a nice thing to do.

Here's some ways you can increase the heartfelt positive moments in your life and in doing so build wellbeing. I've left some space for you to take one of these each day and reflect on it.

You can increase

The number - Notice the ones you might have missed and look for opportunities to have more of them! (now that's the kind of homework I like)

The range – have fun in noticing and experiencing lots of *different types* of positive moments. Use Barbara Fredrickson's list above, but why be limited to this? Find your own words and phrases to describe the moments, and if you don't have the words, take a 'mental and feeling' snapshot of what it's like.

Their intensity – let them in more. Practice noticing the different inner responses and feelings to different heartfelt experiences. You might have to ‘soften’ your state of being to allow them in. Some people imagine it’s like opening inner gateways to the experience. It is a conscious decision, allowing, or inviting this to happen.

Their value/importance – realize the value they have in nourishing and building you. Be appreciative of this. Appreciate their presence no matter how subtle or strong.

Activities

Here's some suggested activities. Choose the one/s which you think will be best for you, or the most enjoyable!

Doing them for 1 week will do you good, 2 weeks is wonderful, 3 is superb. Sometimes it takes longer, but in 3-6 weeks you certainly should start seeing an increase in your underlying level of wellbeing.

Fit

Do things in a way that works for you. Some activities will probably work better for you than others. Feel free to adapt what you do to make it work better for you.

Dosage

Often it is a good idea to spend time each day on your activity, aiming for 5 days in the week. For this to work you need to keep it small and doable. For some people specific exercises work best if they are done once a week, for example many people find that Gratitude and Appreciation exercises are more effective and more sustainable if done once a week as compared to 3 or more times a week.

Having structure and a commitment works for many people, but some people just incorporate it into their day when they think of it. Some people do the 'I'll spend time on this no matter how I feel'; others just play around with it. Some people say they will spend 1 day a week, or 1 week, particularly being mindful of heartfelt nourishing experiences, and for the rest go on as normal. You have to do what works for you, and if it isn't working then look at another approach. No big drama.

For different people wellbeing happens in different ways and different timings. What's important is that on some level make a commitment to yourself. No matter how slow, fast, or up and down the progress, you are following a worthwhile path.

Here's some ideas to help build nourishment

- Spend time remembering times when you felt a sense of wellbeing, of feeling good in yourself, when you were 'in the zone', 'in a great space' or at your best. Allow yourself to enjoy this.
- Open your heart – this is a great exercise to build your responsiveness to wellbeing. Simply bring to your heart the feelings associated with one type of wellbeing eg, love, appreciation, curiosity, etc. You don't need to think of a particular situation, just let the general feeling come. This exercise nourishes you, as well as builds your heart's wellbeing muscle so that wellbeing is more readily experienced.
- Draw or create something that represents an experience of wellbeing that you had during the day.
- Bring to heart and mind 3 things that happened recently that you are grateful or appreciative of. Start a Gratitude/Appreciation journal.
- Do something for someone else without expecting something in return.
- Pass on a genuine compliment. Write to someone and thank them for something they have done. Remember, don't fake it. Better to do small, real and sincere, than over the top.
- Be quiet and still for a short period each day. Judge the length depending on what you need. Some days your mind will be cluttered or your emotions going, it's not a problem. Just be still and notice them, sometimes they will quieten down, sometimes they won't, it doesn't really matter. You'll notice the positive benefit during the day.
- Meditate – any sort will do. A loving kindness meditation has been shown to be particularly effective for building wellbeing.
- Come up with your own and send them in! I love to share them with others (and of course use them myself ☺)

Tips on building Nourishing Moments

- *Allow room for Nourishing Moments. Consciously open the space and opportunities for them to be there.*
- *It can take practice. Like a muscle it builds over time the more you exercise it. And the more you exercise it the easier it comes and greater benefits you get.*



Like a muscle, it builds up over time the more you exercise it.

- *Approach experiencing Nourishment from a place of discovery, rather than trying to achieve something.*
- *Don't force Nourishing Moments or 'try' to have them.*
- *Be genuine. This isn't about 'faking it until you make it', 'putting on a happy face' or pretending. That's likely to be more damaging than good.*
- *The intensity of the heartfelt response doesn't have to be large or significant, it might be subtle.*
- *Don't 'judge' if you are up to some sort of mark. Hey, it's about finding ways to increase nourishment, not something to judge yourself on.*
- *It's not about getting rid of things that are uncomfortable or painful, or trying to minimize them. It's not bad or wrong if you don't feel nourishment at any time. Look kindly on yourself, however you are.*