

Positive Psychology and the Wheel of Well-being

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Pillars of Positive Psychology and wowe	2
3. The Science	3
4. References	4

wowe & its Foundations in Positive Psychology

1. Introduction

wowe is rooted in the science of positive psychology and machine learning-led insights. In positive psychology, it is believed that good psychological health is about thriving and living an actively meaningful and flourishing life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology also posits that happiness and well-being are continually evolving states that you create yourself. The current thinking is that approximately 40 percent of our emotional well-being is under our control (Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2005).

While the exact definition of a meaningful and happy life varies between individuals, positive psychology research indicates that there are several common factors.

wowe has drawn on those factors in creating **our unique wowe model**, which addresses emotional well-being, physical wellness, relationships and connection, environment and community, passion and purpose, and, finally, transcendence—moving beyond ourselves to make a positive contribution to the lives of others and the world we live in—as the essential components of thriving.

2. Pillars of Positive Psychology and wowe

The positive psychology principles we employ to help get you there include:

1. [Positive interventions](#)

The activities that we consciously choose and intentional practices we can implement to boost happiness both in the moment and over the long term. wowe is built around positive interventions with our recommended daily wins, habit-building activities, and transformation goals.

2. The [upward-spiral theory of positive emotions](#)

This theory tells us that the biochemical boost we get from healthy, positive behaviors is self-reinforcing, a positive feedback loop that boosts our motivation to continue those behaviors (Frederickson, 2004). wowe leverages this upward spiral with positive reinforcement and journaling exercises to help users move toward their goals, build on the positive behaviors that we help them establish, and continuously improve.

3. [Intrinsic motivation](#)

wowe harnesses the science of human motivation to help users discover their best selves and live their best lives. In particular, wowe utilizes a combination of the *theory of intrinsic motivation*, which views people's innate priorities as the most effective

motivators (Oettingen, 2014), and [self-efficacy theory](#), which looks at people's self-confidence that they can achieve their goals (Maddux, 2009). wowe helps users identify their personal goals and connect with their intrinsic motivation by letting them choose from different, science-backed well-being targets and boosts their sense of self-efficacy by guiding them toward those targets step-by-step and helping them recognize their achievements along the way.

3. The Science

Leading positive psychologist Dr. Barbara Frederickson's work has focused on the importance of positive emotions, both to our well-being and from an evolutionary standpoint.

Some of the features that most set humans apart from other animals are our abilities to communicate, cooperate and collaborate. Frederickson's *Broaden and Build Theory* posits that positive emotions played an important role in how early humans developed those abilities (Frederickson, 2004). While the theory of our inherent *negativity bias*— which explains why we tend to be more attuned to negative input than positive—and the role it plays in keeping us safe from threats is perhaps better known (Vaish, Grossman & Woodward, 2008), positive emotions may have been equally important in human evolution. Frederickson explains that, while the negativity bias was important to the survival of the human species, positive emotions were key in the development of those essential traits that allowed us to develop organized, cooperative societies. Her *Broaden and Build Theory* is a description of what may be the first example of humans moving from surviving to thriving (Frederickson. 2004).

wowe pulls this in by curating activities that produce positive emotions and continues to reinforce those positive traits that support good communication, cooperation, and collaboration. We're far more able to connect positively with others, and thus more skilled in those key areas when we're in a positive frame of mind (Frederickson, 2004). This is why, as research shows, a happy individual is a healthy individual who can give their best in life. The wowe platform fosters these positive values and skills through the activities we recommend across the six essential life domains represented by our well-being dimensions, all of which are targeted toward boosting and optimizing our users' well-being.

The *Upward Spiral Theory of Positive Emotions* is another celebrated area of Frederickson's research. This science-backed theory refers to the self-reinforcing, escalating positive feedback loop produced by healthy behavior changes. The loop describes how the felt experience of increased well-being reinforces the motivation to continue that healthy behavior, and the well-being benefits of the behavior, including the biochemical boost it produces (i.e., experiencing more positive emotions), increase cumulatively from continued repetition (Frederickson, B. 2009).

wowe utilizes the *Upward Spiral Theory* in our mood and goal progress tracking functions, which encourage users to notice the effects of their chosen activities daily and to track their

progress with a focus on continually boosting and reinforcing their intrinsic motivation to continue with the activities they enjoy the most until they become regular, ongoing habits. Science has shown that activities done for their own sake are substantially more beneficial than ones that we have to force ourselves through because we think we should (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2006; Vallerand, 2012). In other words, finding the activities we most enjoy will net those Upward Spiral rewards most effectively, and that's what our Discovery page is all about.

4. References

Carbanneau, N., Lafrenière, M.K., Vallerand, R.J. (2012). Toward a Tripartite Model of Intrinsic Motivation. National Library of Medicine-National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22092087/>

Celestine, Nicole. (2016, August 30). Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. Positive Psychology. <https://positivepsychology.com/broaden-build-theory/>

Self-Efficacy Theory - various articles. Science Direct. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/self-efficacy-theory>

Fredrickson, B., Joiner, T. (2018, March 13). Reflections On Positive Emotions and Upward Spirals. National Library of Medicine-National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29592643/>

Fredrickson, B. (2009). Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive. New York: Crown.

Frederickson, B. (2004, September 29). The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. National Library of Medicine-National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15347528/>

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. Review of General Psychology, Vol. 9, No. 2, 111–131

Maddux, J. E. (2009). Self-efficacy: The power of believing you can. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), Oxford handbook of positive psychology (Kindle ed.) (pp. 275-287). New York: Oxford University Press.

Oettingen, G. (2014) Rethinking positive thinking: Inside the new science of motivation. New York: Current (a division of Penguin Random House).

Pelletier, L.G., Fortier, M.S., Vallerand, R.J., Tuson, K.M., Brière, N.M., Blais, M.R. (1995). Toward a new measure of intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and motivation in sports: The sport motivation scale (SMS). *Journal of sport & exercise psychology*, 17, 35-53. Human Kinetics Publishers Inc.

Ryan, R. M., Huta, V., & Deci, E. L. (2006). Living well: A self-determination theory perspective on eudaimonia. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 139-170.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069-1081. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069

Salsman, J. M. & Moskowitz, J. T. (2015). Complementary Strengths of Health Psychology and Positive Psychology. In S. Joseph (Ed.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.393-409). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *Positive psychology: An introduction*. *American Psychologist*, 55, 5-14.

Vaish, A., Grossman, T. & Woodward, A. (2013, May 13). Not all emotions are created equal: The negativity bias in social-emotional development. National Library of Medicine-National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3652533/>

Vallerand, R.J. The role of passion in sustainable psychological well-being. *Psych Well-Being* 2, 1 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.1186/2211-1522-2-1>

Vallerand, R.J. (1997). Toward a hierarchical model of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, volume 29, 271-360.