

The PERMA Theory of Wellbeing



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The concept

The PERMA theory of wellbeing, popularised by Martin Seligman in his fabulous book *Flourish*, suggests that there are 5 primary drivers of wellbeing:

1. **P**ositive emotion – the extent which people feel happy
2. **E**ngagement – the extent to which people are ‘lost’ in the activities they are undertaking
3. **R**elationships – the extent to which people have positive connections with others
4. **M**eaning – the extent to which people find meaning and purpose through activities
5. **A**chievement – the extent to which people feel they are achieving progress or results.

If all these elements are in abundance for individuals, then they are likely to have a sense of wellbeing and said to be ‘flourishing’! We have added an extra element – vitality – around physical health.

Why it’s useful

While this concept applies to a person’s ‘whole life’ it certainly has application to their work life. As a leader it is a useful lens through which to reflect upon the wellbeing of people you lead – the presence of these key drivers will likely be a predictor of work performance.

How/when to apply it

The model could be applied both informally and formally. *Informally* it could provide a mental model when managing staff performance – helping to understand the barriers to performance. More *formally* it could be used as the basis for a pulse survey to get a handle on workplace climate or a framework for a facilitated workshop discussion about *how to improve things around here*.

