

INTRODUCTION

Brief No. 1

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This is the first brief related to the series, Emotional Well-Being: The Science and Practice of Feeling Well. This first brief contains an overview of the series, and starts off with some foundations of emotional well-being.

Series Overview

The purpose of Emotional Well-Being: The Science and Practice of Feeling Well is to provide you resources to learn about emotional well-being. This series also includes activities and exercises to dive into how you can promote emotional well-being in your own life. There are seven modules covering a bunch of related topics:

Seven Modules in the Series

1. Introduction
2. Physical Health
3. Positive Emotion
4. Sense of Meaning
5. Life Satisfaction
6. Goal Pursuit
7. The Road Ahead

Each module contains three objectives, which are explored through readings, videos, and activities. You can move at your own pace, and choose to engage with whichever materials spark your interest! We suggest that you begin with Module 1, however, as it sets the stage for the rest of the modules. After Module 1, we encourage you to choose your own adventure. Navigate wherever your emotional well-being takes you!

Emotional Well-Being Handouts

As you go through the modules, we encourage you to build your Emotional Well-Being toolkit using the module handouts. We created a document for each module for you to add to as you work through the content. It has spaces to jot your ideas as you explore the content, and activities to help you apply the information to your own life. After completing the handouts, you can take them with you as a guide to bringing emotional well-being into your daily life. Download your own copies from our website.

Module 1 Objectives

By the end of Module 1, you will be able to:

1. Explain the purpose of this series.
2. Define emotional well-being.
3. Describe what shapes emotional experiences at individual and group levels.

Defining Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being has many parts that capture how positive an individual feels generally, and about their life overall. It includes:

- **Experiential features:** emotional quality of everyday experiences
- **Reflective features:** life satisfaction, sense of meaning, and goal pursuit

These features occur in the context of culture, life circumstances, resources, and age¹.

Researchers have distinguished between two features of emotional well-being: experiential and reflective. **Experiential features** refer to the parts of emotional well-being that are experienced in the moment. These include the emotional quality of everyday experiences. **Reflective features** refer to those that require you to reflect upon your experiences. These include life satisfaction, sense of meaning, and goal pursuit. Some terms related to emotional well-being include well-being, wellness, quality of life, and community health.

Experiential and reflective features vary across cultures and life stages. Independent cultures tend to value personal thoughts and feelings, while interdependent cultures emphasize relationships and social influence on identity. Age also plays a role – for instance, infants and older adults experience and value well-being differently due to their unique life circumstances. You can find more details about how culture and life stage influence emotional well-being below.



Independent Cultures

- Valued as a unique individual
- Create identity based on one's own feelings and thoughts instead of others³



Interdependent Cultures

- Self is based on connections with others
- Identity changes through life as relationships begin and end³



Babies and toddlers

- Well-being is heavily based on experiential features
- Parents are advised to create an everyday routine that involves reading, singing, and playing⁴
- The quality of these everyday experiences shapes a baby or toddler's emotional well-being



Older adults

- Well-being is heavily based on reflective features
- Reflect on meaningful life experiences
- Understand various life purposes they have/had throughout life
- Everyday experiences (exercising, connecting with loved ones) are still important but emphasis on reflection

What are Emotions?

Emotions are complex and can be difficult to measure. They're not hardwired into our brains like computer programs. Instead, they're shaped by predictions we make based on our past experiences. We often think we can read emotions from facial expressions, but we're actually making educated guesses influenced by context and culture. In other words, different expressions and facial movements may convey different meanings depending on the situation, context, and culture⁵. For example, a study found that Chinese and White (mostly European) individuals differ in the way they use facial expressions to communicate emotion. White people used different parts of the face such as the eyebrows and the mouth to express emotion while Chinese people relied more on the eye region, specifically where the eyes were gazing. Members of the Chinese group expected gaze to be part of the emotional communication and impacted how they interpreted facial expressions⁶.

Your Turn!

At the end of each module, we want to present you with a Call to Action where we call upon you to dive deeper into an area explored in the module. For this module, we want you to take some time to engage in reflection. Take out your Module 1 Handout and reflect on the following questions on page 1.



Why did you choose to engage with this series?

What is **one** topic you're hoping to learn more about? Why are you hoping to learn more about it?

For a Deeper Dive

To learn more, check out the following resources:

Greater Good Science Center

[The Science of Happiness Podcast](#)

This podcast presents research-based happiness practices you can incorporate into your everyday life, such as dancing and gratitude.

Action for Happiness

[10 Keys to Happier Living](#)

This website presents the "10 Keys" to happier living and provides more information on each one.

Collaboratory on School and Child Health

[Measuring Emotional Well-Being](#)

This brief presents information related to the importance, methods, and complexities of measuring emotional well-being. It also presents next steps related to the future of measuring emotional well-being.



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¹ Park, C. L., Kubzansky, L. D., Chafouleas, S. M., Davison, R. J., Keltner, D., Parsafar, P., Conwell, Y., Martin, M. Y., Hanmer, J., & Wang, K. H. (2023). Emotional well-being: What it is and why it matters. *Affective Science*, 4(1), 10-20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42761-022-00163-0>

² Koslouski, J. B., Ruiz, O., Marcy, H.M., and Chafouleas, S.M. (2023, August). *What is Emotional Well-being?* Storrs, CT: UConn Collaboratory on School and Child Health. Available from: <http://csch.uconn.edu/>.

³ Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (2014). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. In *College student development and academic life* (pp. 264-293). Routledge.

⁴ Seattle Children's. *Your Baby's Emotional Health*. <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/parenting/infant-emotional-health/>.

⁵ TED. (2018, January 23). *You aren't at the mercy of your emotions -- your brain creates them* / Lisa Feldman Barrett [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/0gks6ceq4eQ?si=u2mTWzGjqPyVg-jx>.

⁶ Jack, R. E., Caldara, R., & Schyns, P. G. (2012). Internal representations reveal cultural diversity in expectations of facial expressions of emotion. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 141(1), 19-25.

