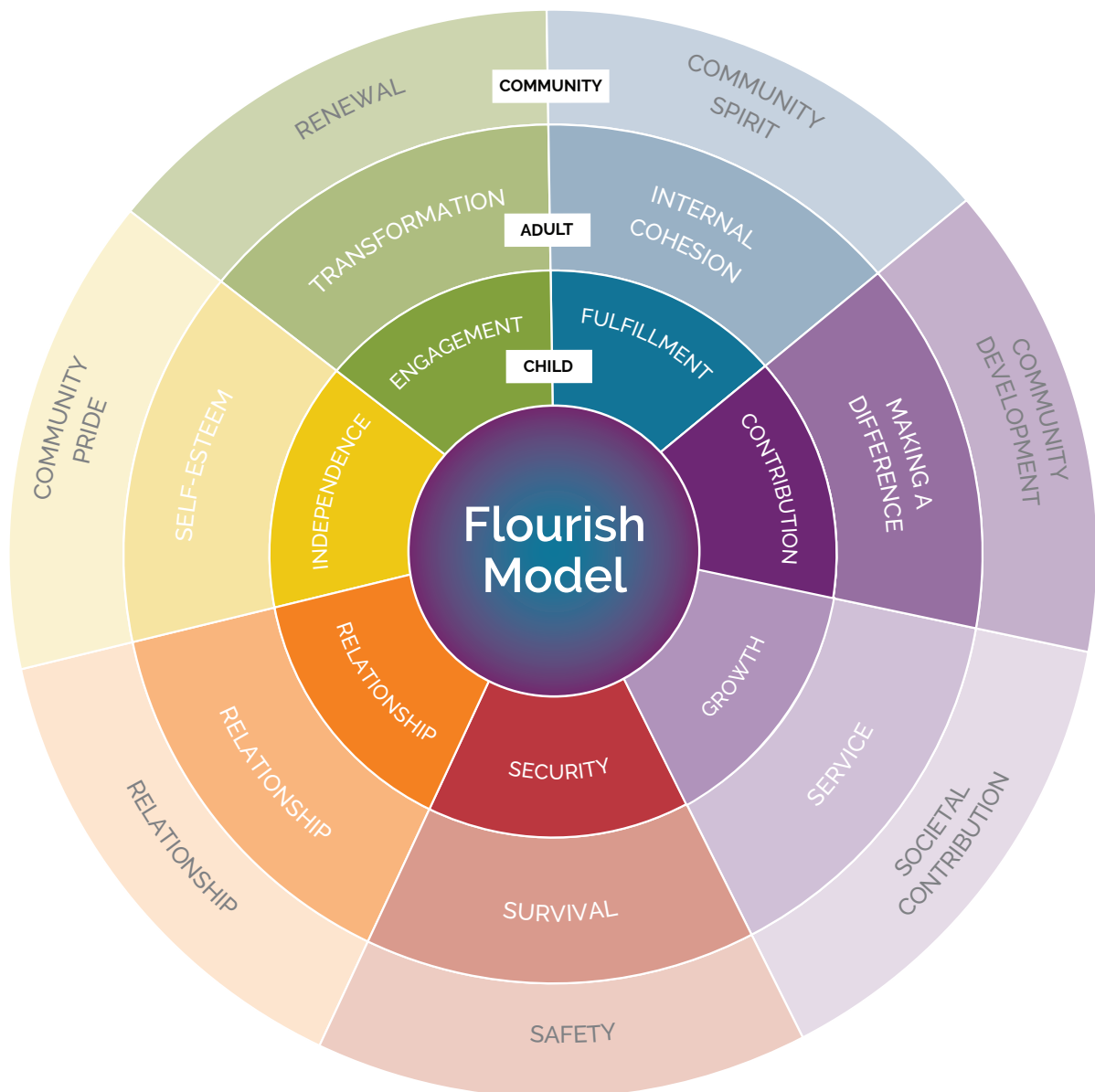


The Ecology of Wellbeing

Introducing the Flourish Model

Wendy Ellyatt, 2020



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Introducing the Flourish Model

Abstract

Across the world people have been exploring ways in which we can better measure development and progress in terms of human wellbeing. A number of challenges have arisen in the approaches undertaken by different countries and cultures, but there has been clear agreement that measures of GDP alone are not sufficient and that we need to develop a more coherent global approach. There has also been clear agreement that the current systems are failing to appropriately support the development of flourishing communities and an equitable, sustainable and stable planet.

This paper introduces the Flourish Model as a new ecological wellbeing framework that seeks to address the current lack of eco-systemic thinking in how we approach and measure wellbeing. In doing so it seeks to draw together accepted wisdom from a wide range of disciplines, including systems science, biology, cognitive and developmental psychology, economics, sociology and peace studies.

Most global wellbeing frameworks currently focus on measuring and improving the specific individual outcomes and outputs of their interventions. By contrast, the Flourish Model is a dynamic and non-linear systems model that also explores the assets and inputs of the whole system i.e. *what has shaped* people's values, beliefs and mindsets, the promotion of self-awareness, identifying a person's own physical, emotional, mental and spiritual assets, identifying and isolating deficits and liabilities, as well as stimulating thoughts, conversations and learning about what makes a good and meaningful life.

It introduces the essential, and currently almost universally neglected, element of 'developing well' to the current global discussions on wellbeing, and promotes the understanding that we are all shaped by our genetic inheritance and the worlds that we experience as children. As such, it extends the Carnegie Trust's existing four aspects of wellbeing¹ to incorporate an essential fifth.

Planetary Wellbeing (Living Well Sustainably)

Societal Wellbeing (Living Well Together)

Community Wellbeing (Living Well Locally)

Personal Wellbeing (Living Well)

Early Wellbeing (Developing Well)

It shows that beneath our unique developmental experiences, we share a common humanity that is reflected through 'right relationship' with Self, Others and the Natural World. Through acknowledging our sameness, it shows we can let go of the developmental ties that have individually and collectively been binding us to the past and perpetuating both personal and global conflict. Through actively seeking to develop coherence on a collective level, it shows us that we have the power and possibility to shape the future that we really want.

Keywords: Wellbeing, GDP, Flourishing, Happiness, Values, Mindsets, Worldviews, Trauma, ACES, Equity, Community; Sustainability, Systems Thinking, Ecosystems, Children, Education, Future Generations, Spirituality, Compassion, Peace

Introduction

We are currently living in strange and fascinating times, where change is happening at a rate perhaps never before experienced in human history. This, of course, brings with it huge challenges, but it also presents us with huge possibilities related to our shared ability to choose the future that we all really want, rather than the one that might be predictable.

One of the key aspects of this phase is a raised human awareness of how we are all interconnected and how the things that go in one part of the world directly influence other parts. We are also becoming more aware of how our own values, mindsets and internal states have been profoundly influenced by the environments that we have uniquely experienced, and how these states then impact on others. According to the 2019 World Peace Index, the global economic impact of violence was \$14.1 trillion PPP in 2018, equivalent to 11.2 per cent of global GDP or \$1,853 per person.² There are deep social structures at play that are constantly shaping the emergent patterns of the future³, currently with three major divides - spiritual, social and ecological.

To become more aware we therefore need to explore both the inner and outer aspects of human societies i.e.

Understanding the world from '**Inside-out**' – how our own backgrounds, experiences, values, thoughts and emotions influence our behaviour and activities

And '**outside-in**' – how the external pressures and expectations of the systems that we live within (i.e. families, communities, political and religious systems and cultures) influence our thoughts, emotions, values and behaviours.

The model promotes an understanding of the **Ecological Self** and is implemented as a holistic framework that shows the intimate relationship between self, others and the natural world. As a whole-systems model, the framework enables the mapping of all seventeen of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of child developmental wellbeing.

The Flourish Model

A new Ecological Wellbeing Framework

Over the last decade we have seen global recognition that we need to recognise the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions of what it is to be a human being and that if we focus only on some areas at the expense of others it results in unhappy and stressed children and adults. It has become clear that we are complex beings designed to live in dynamic connection with others and the wider world. Although our brains are amazing organs, to feel whole we need to engage all our senses,

nurture our spirits, inspire our minds and fulfil our hearts.

The Flourish Model reflects the current need for a new '**Ecology of Wellbeing**' that better conveys

- the importance of always looking at the wellbeing of the whole system
- how human wellbeing is intimately connected to the wellbeing of others and the planet
- how outcomes and outputs need to be balanced within a context of assets and inputs
- how healthy brain architecture relies on positive early developmental environments and experiences
- how values, beliefs and behaviours are all shaped by early developmental environments and experiences
- how children have natural developmental rights that need to be protected
- how trauma is carried forward through the generations and the need for compassion-based, trauma-informed communities
- how states of wellbeing are always dynamic and responsive to individual meaning and interpretation
- how diversity is an essential aspect of unity
- how flourishing always involves personal challenge, struggle and growth and is more complex and interesting than states of simple happiness
- how we always have choice and do not have to be limited by our genes, our early conditioning, our stories or our labels
- how focusing on our preferred future helps us to create our preferred future

From an ecological perspective, we need to seek to balance skills and abilities with the cultivation of the kind of attitudes and values that we need to see in the world. In other words, we need a fully integrated approach that acknowledges that our own survival may depend on the decisions that we take at this time. There is a common acknowledgement that the old models, where we only focused on one aspect of the system, all too often at the expense of others, are no longer either valid or sustainable. There is also an acknowledgement that human flourishing is a dynamic and lifelong process that incorporates the more transitory psychological state of happiness, but that more fundamentally involves personal struggle, difficulty and the overcoming of past obstacles, limitations and fears. We are complex beings, living in a complex world.

The model seeks to consolidate the findings of the new Science of Child Development with the work of the leading contemporary thinkers Amartya Sen⁴, Fritjof Capra⁵, James Heckman⁶, Richard Layard⁷, Martin Seligman⁸, Richard Barrett⁹, Neil Hawkes¹⁰ Otto Scharmer¹¹, Thomas Hubl¹² and Gabor Mate¹³. It incorporates the indigenous call for a more cohesive and holistic understanding of human wellbeing and provides an evidence-base for compassion and values-based living.^{14 15}

The Whole System - a unified reality

***“Biological Networks:** operate in the realm of matter, produce material structures, exchange molecules in networks of chemical reactions, produce and sustain a material boundary that imposes constraints on the chemistry that takes place inside it.*

Social Networks: *operate in the realm of meaning, produce the non-material characteristics of culture, exchange information and ideas in networks of communications, also create material structures in pursuit of shared values, meaning and purpose, produce and sustain a non-material cultural boundary that imposes constraints on the behaviour of its members"*

Fritjof Capra, *The Systems View of Life* ¹⁶

Through a burgeoning interest in natural systems design, there is increasing recognition that we are seeing a new field-based science that acknowledges the natural self-organizing power inherent in all forms of life. This brings human awareness in tune with the generative creative impulses that are engaged in constantly transforming the field of knowledge/intelligence into the field of matter, with every element materializing the form that best suits its nature, together with the circumstances that enable it to grow and perfect itself.¹⁷ It suggests that there is a natural intelligence which is the root criterion of all life - whether this is then expressed as a bacterial cell, a plant, an animal or a human being. No matter where it occurs, this intelligence is based upon precise mathematical principles and an unfolding order. From the human perspective it manifests as generative creativity and the need to achieve a balance between the expression of the parts and that of the whole. This underlying need for natural order is experienced as beauty and harmony and expressed as flow and fulfilment. It can be understood as the life force or 'spiritual essence' that underpins human existence.

The spiritual essence of each human being emerges from oneness at conception, experiences an embodied human life of learning and relational experience, and subsequently returns to oneness. As Bob Samples identified in *The Metaphoric Mind*¹⁸, we are natural animals first and cultural animals second. Spirituality is grounded in a deep experience of natural reality, that is intuitive and non-intellectual, and is independent of cultural and historical contexts. At conception the developing embryo carries forward inherited tendencies/pre-dispositions. Whether these potentially positive or limiting tendencies are reinforced or dissipated (though the turning on or off of DNA tags) depends entirely on the subsequent pre and postnatal experiences of the individual.¹⁹ Gene expression is based foundationally on the human biological template, but there are significant epigenetic factors which affect and amend such expression. Over time, and through the steady development of the personality and protective ego, the human being then increasingly experiences his or herself as a 'self-contained' centre that is separate from the whole and all other centres.

There are four different sorts of biological memory that inform who we are, but most are ones that we are not consciously aware of. Underneath all of these is a natural intelligence that is always trying to bring us into a sense of balance and wholeness.

Evolutionary Memory (Unconscious)

The fact that we are a specific species and carry with us all the biological survival information that has been steadily built up since the first humans existed. As such, this is embedded within the context of 'Deep Time', which is a phrase that the Buddhist teacher and activist Joanna Macy borrowed from Deep Ecology^{20 21}

Epigenetic Memory (Unconscious)

The biological information that we carry forward from the environmental experiences of our own direct ancestors. *For example, we now know that if grandparents lived through a period of famine,*

their grandchildren are more prone to eating disorders.

Genetic Memory (Unconscious)

The biological information that we carry forward from our own parents and which is then moulded by our unique personal environmental experiences. *We know that genes can be turned on and off depending on the nature of these experiences.*

Intellectual Memory (Conscious)

The neurological structures and connections that are shaped by our unique environmental experiences.

With good mothering and strong early attachment, the new baby initially has no significant sense of separation. Over time however, and through his or her unique environmental experiences, the developing child starts to experience his or herself as separate to others and to adopt the emotional limits and boundaries necessary to maintain love and acceptance within the family/community. If consistently repressed these energetic boundaries then build up further nodes of condensed experience that become linked to others of a similar resonance.²² Through the function of cellular memory, these chains of emotionally charged experience are therefore either built up and reinforced – or broken down and released. All early memories are based upon sensory experience within the environment - which means that babies and young children effectively 'absorb' the environment into their physical body and sense of self.²³

The natural developmental processes within each child seek to maintain a balance between intrinsic and extrinsic forces while constantly striving for wholeness and growth. In other words, all human beings strive to return to the sense of harmony and oneness that we experienced before we each developed our individual personalities. There is a core intelligence at play, with every defence pattern that we create manifesting as an intelligent function of our nervous system. Babies can easily express and release any sensory energy in their systems, but this process becomes increasingly difficult as we age. As primarily social beings, relationship is crucial to human development. The innate need to experience love and belonging means that with children will seek to adopt the values and worldviews that they experience in their connection with others. The experiences children have in early life literally shape their brain architecture.²⁴ Their developing neurological structures influence how safe they feel, how confidently they seek to interact with the world and the ways in which they feel about themselves and relate to others. Their mindsets and inner maps of the world are therefore steadily created over time through their unique environmental experiences, which include the people in their world.

The Importance of Flow

The input, throughput and output processes of living systems are always trying to achieve a state of energetic homeostasis or optimal functioning. They spontaneously include the emergence of new forms of order at points of instability. Generative creativity is therefore the underlying nature of life, learning and evolution. Continuing learning, adaptation and development are key characteristics of the behaviour of all living systems, as we try to optimise our own development within the context of the larger system.

“This spontaneous emergence of new order at critical points of instability, which is nowadays often referred to just as “emergence,” is the key characteristic of dynamic self-organization, and is in fact one of the hallmarks of life. It has been recognized as the underlying dynamic of development, of learning, and of evolution. In other words, creativity — the generation of new forms of order — is a key property of all living systems. Nature always reaches out into new territory to create novelty.”²⁵

Finding individual meaning and purpose in our lives is therefore essential, but from a systems-perspective this has a collaborative aspect where personal maturation is linked to the needs of broader society. Cultural psychologists have shown that people from the wealthier western countries have increasingly developed a more individualistic social orientation, where the emphasis lies on self-image and personal achievement ²⁶, whereas those from eastern countries are more likely to see their own wellbeing as intrinsically linked to the wellbeing of others. In recent years the German concept of ‘Bildung’ has started to attract global interest, in that it promotes maturation as a ‘harmonization of the individual's mind and heart in unification of selfhood and identity within the broader society’.²⁷ This process is achieved through personal transformation, which presents a challenge to the individual's social conditioning and accepted beliefs. In her latest book, Rachel Andersen defines Bildung as follows:

“Bildung is moral and emotional maturity. Bildung is to have the education and knowledge necessary to thrive in your society; Bildung is to be deeply embedded in culture and community while having the autonomy to carve your own path in life. Bildung is always personal and unique”²⁸

Natural systems always provide maximum freedom of the parts to invite in novelty, but also promote maximum coherence (health/vitality) of the whole. Structure is the springboard for creativity (both generative and adaptive) and leads to flow within the system. Nature, always uses minimal structure to achieve maximum flow.

“Generative creativity, in which things are created as the result of a process regardless of their end value and adaptive creativity, in which things are created as adaptive responses by a system to its situation. The former unleashes the potential of the mind to conceive new and unfettered ideas, whereas the latter is all about applying innovative thinking within the parameters of an existing known structure or system.” - Fritjof Capra ²⁹

Researchers into creativity and intrinsic motivation have discovered an underlying similarity that is common to all intrinsically rewarding activities: they all give the participants a sense of discovery, exploration and problem solution. They also appear to need no goals or rewards external to the activity itself. In Chicago Professor Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi spent many years studying states of optimal experience in adults- those times when they report feelings of intense concentration and deep enjoyment - and has showed that what makes experience genuinely satisfying is the state of highly creative consciousness which he also calls ‘flow’. ³⁰ According to him the state of Flow occurs when the experience of learning becomes its own reward and he terms this an ‘autotelic’ or self-rewarding experience. In the flow state action follows upon action according to an internal logic that seems to need no conscious intervention by the personality.

In the Flow state the achievement of goals is no longer a priority. Rather, the freedom from having to focus on any specific end result allows the individual to escape the confines of boredom or anxiety and

to fully enjoy the experience for itself. The experience itself becomes immensely fulfilling, but this does not necessarily equate with simple pleasure, for many flow activities are, to all intents and purposes, immensely complex, time-consuming and even frustrating. It is all about finding the balance between environmental challenge and personal capacities and each individual responds to this in his or her unique way.

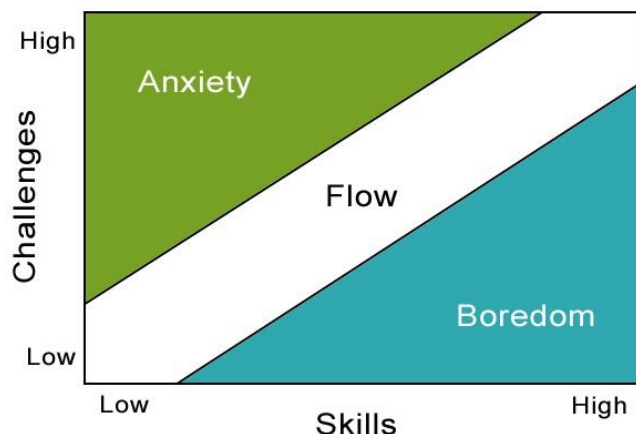


Fig 1 Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, The Psychology of Optimal Experience

Perhaps the state that we most associate with childhood ‘flow’ is that of play, but from a psychological point of view work and play are not opposites and what matters is the intense involvement of the participant in an experience that gives them both meaning and purpose. This is the essence of intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) motivation. Play is so important to human beings because it allows us to generatively reach out into novelty without the risk of failure or the need to achieve any externally imposed result. Personal meaning, purpose and playfulness are all essential for human wellbeing.

The Power of Vulnerability

Flourishing, for any system, is when it has therefore achieved a state of equilibrium between the demands of external boundaries and the need to achieve internal flow (i.e. the stability of structure and the fluidity of change). All life forms are ultimately shaped by meaningful information flows that are expressed energetically, but the boundaries of these actually face both ways – in other words, there is always a dynamic inclusion of self within local neighbourhood.³¹ This understanding underpins the dynamic, relational nature of systems and reveals a way of life in which human beings can enjoy more empathic and meaningful relationships with one another, other life forms and the environments that we live in. Flourishing is all about achieving right or ‘authentic’ relationship – with yourself, with others and with the natural world. Vulnerability (i.e. being able to openly share your own thoughts and emotions) is inherent in this process and is essential for human experience.

The courage to allow yourself to be vulnerable is therefore essential for human growth. Vulnerability involves emotional exposure, opens us up to being seen through the eyes of others and is deeply connected to our sense of self-worth. Very early on in life we learn that our feelings of worth are tied up into external perceptions and value measurements relating to who we are, and that authenticity is therefore a dangerous place to be. The dilemma is that we are always being pulled towards self-expression and wholeness and for us to flourish we need to be supported in letting go of all the fears that may have been holding us back. Flourishing is therefore not about being perfect, but is, instead,

about being supremely human. The inner healer in each of us is always looking for opportunities to bring our minds, emotions and bodies into connection and wholeness with the dynamics of the natural world. There is a natural energy of integration that invites us to let go of our individual and conditioned selves and to unite with the emergent and dynamic patterns and principles of the larger system.

In this way it helps us appreciate the fact that even our physical bodies are not actually separate, but instead differentiated/individuated and that our values, thoughts and actions are constantly shaping the dynamics of the emergent system. In the same way, the energy of the external system is always influencing our own inner dynamics.

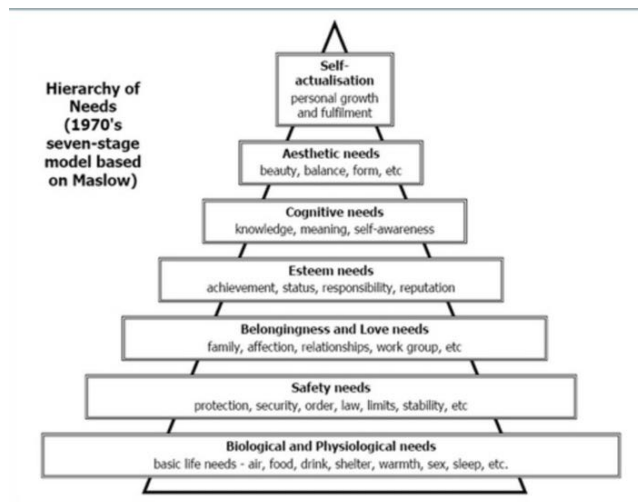
Background to the model

Until the 1990s GDP remained the most talked about and implemented measure of economic performance and social progress. This was despite the increasing levels of disquiet about an over-focus on the success of the individual, the goal of achieving ever-increasing profits no matter what the human or ecological cost and the indisputable observation that there is much more to life than economics and material goods³² We are only now seeing consistent instances of the systemic collection of subjective wellbeing data, but the frameworks and methodologies remain diverse and challenging to consolidate and accurately interpret. Public policy thinking in both developed and developing countries have too often remained dominated by ‘top-down’ theories of social and economic development and these have perpetuated the very limiting criteria through which we have been measuring social progress. All too often, we have focused on optimising the performance of some aspects of the system at the expense of others.

What we do know, however, from the World Happiness Reports, is that the happiest countries consistently exhibit the high values for all six of the key variables that have been found to support well-being: income, healthy life expectancy, social support, freedom, trust and generosity.³³ They are also consistently the countries that demonstrate the lowest levels of inequality.

The importance of lived experience means that we need to find out what really matters to people and a prime influencer in the original thinking behind the model was the author Richard Barrett with his interest in how to initiate positive cultural evolution in business and society. In the mid 1990s Barrett developed his ‘Seven Levels of Consciousness® Model’ as a further development of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. The model suggested that, whether as individuals, organisations or nations, we operate at levels of consciousness and we grow in stages of psychological development.

Maslow’s original Theory of Needs was a motivational theory in psychology originally comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the original needs that he defined were physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization. These were then further divided into deficiency needs and growth needs. Deficiency needs arise due to deprivation and motivate people when they are unmet. Also, the motivation to fulfil such needs will become stronger the longer the duration they are denied. Growth needs do not stem from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow and learn as a person. In 1970 Maslow revised the model to include cognitive and aesthetic needs and later transcendence needs



Maslow's Hierarchy of needs summary

- (a) human beings are motivated by a hierarchy of needs
- (b) needs are organized in a hierarchy of pre-potency in which the more basic needs must be more or less met prior to higher needs
- (c) the order of needs is not rigid, but instead may be flexible based on external circumstances or individual differences.
- (d) most behaviour is multi-motivated i.e. simultaneously determined by more than one basic need.

Fig 2 Abraham Maslow, 1970s Extended Theory of Needs

Barrett set about translating the hierarchy of needs into the Seven Levels of Consciousness. In doing so he wanted to show that perceived needs are in reality a reflection of states of consciousness, and that what we value, either consciously or sub-consciously, reveals the level of consciousness that we are operating from. He created a model that consolidated Maslow's work into four levels of human consciousness reflected in human physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs, that then further broke down into the seven basic motivations: survival, relationship, self-esteem, transformation, internal cohesion, making a difference and service.



Fig 3: Barrett Values Centre, 2018

In the Barrett model the first three levels serve the needs of the self as an individual – the ego, whereas the last three levels serve the need of the self as an integrated member of humanity – the soul. The journey therefore takes the individual from being co-dependent to independent, and from being independent to interdependent – from differentiation to integration. A full-spectrum individual was someone who had substantially completed this journey and was able to operate at all levels of consciousness as and when appropriate. Through the Barrett Values Centre he then further developed the model into a series of values mapping instruments known as the Cultural Transformation Tools. He

also introduced the concept of the Seven Levels of Leadership Consciousness.

Barrett believed that the well-being of any nation was significantly influenced by the needs that are uppermost in the minds of its citizens. Understanding these needs was, therefore, vitally important for building successful, harmonious, and peaceful nations. “*Whatever people say they need is what they value and - Nations prosper or fail to the degree that they build social capital*”.³⁴ To-date the centre has carried out more than thirty national assessments with 450,000 people worldwide completing their own Personal Values Assessment (PVAs). When consolidated these have revealed the following top ten values of humanity³⁵.

1. family (2)	174,250
2. humour/fun (5)	144,240
3. caring (2)	133,460
4. respect (2)	121,930
5. friendship (2)	121,780
6. trust (5)	118,390
7. enthusiasm (5)	117,650
8. commitment (5)	116,590
9. creativity (5)	114,740
10. continuous learning (4)	113,880

Fig 4 Barrett Values Centre, 2018

The Flourish framework extended the thinking behind the Barrett model by introducing the science of early childhood to the existing seven levels. It emphasized that there was a crucially important early stage of development that controls *the early shaping of the ego* i.e. that part of the mind that mediates between the conscious and the unconscious and is responsible for reality testing and forming/protecting a sense of personal identity. It retained the four core aspects, but used slightly different labels for five of the levels, in order to highlight the fact that the young child is steadily building up understanding and capacities, together with limitations and fears, through his or her unique genetic dispositions and environmental experiences in the world.

It was then further developed to incorporate the understanding that human beings only exist within a larger ecology of wellbeing that reflects the triple aspect of Self, Others and the Natural World. As such, it echoed the ecological systems theory work of Urie Bronfenbrenner³⁶, the Integral Theories of Ken Wilber³⁷ and Don Beck³⁸ and the work of Jude Currivan and other contemporary physicists, in showing that we live in a fundamentally relational universe that exists and evolves as a unified entity.^{39 40 41 42}

The Foundations of Wellbeing

Throughout most of the enquiries into the measurement of the summative outcomes and outputs of wellbeing what was notably absent was an equal enquiry into the foundations of what shapes and underpins it. Fortunately, over the last decade the new Science of Child Development has been coming to the fore, with the **Harvard Centre for the Developing Child** acting as a key catalyst. The

Canadian **Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)** has also started to look more closely at the child within the context of his or her local environment. Both are multi-disciplinary collaborations designed to bring an understanding of biological, neuro-physiological and psychological development to bear on all public decision-making. Drawing on the best international thinking and research, and employing a rigorous and evidence-based approach, they have been seeking to identify how best to support early learning and development in a manner that enabled every child to flourish and to fulfil his or her full potential.

What the science shows us is that every person has a unique genetic make-up that predisposes him or her to meaning-make in different ways and to be interested in different things. Each person has different pre-dispositions, intelligences, strengths and capacities. And each person perceives and experiences the world in different ways. The environments that we come from and find ourselves within fundamentally shape who we then become.^{43 44 45 46} Although human minds are shaped by the experiences and relationships that come through living in a social world, they also have a deep connection to the natural environments within which they have evolved, and this is consistent with what many indigenous cultures have been telling us. Young children have an innate connection with, and empathy for, the natural world that is evident from the earliest years. One of the most striking changes in children's lives over the past century is the erosion of the time spent in nature and it is becoming clear that this may be having a profound impact, not only on child health and wellbeing, but on their environmental understanding and attitudes in later life.⁴⁷ Children's spirits are actively nourished by the natural world and there is increasing recognition that the natural intelligence of spirituality is something innate that transcends subsequent cultural overlays of belief and religion.^{48 49}

The basic architecture of our brains is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. In the first few years of life, more than one million new neural connections are formed every second.⁵⁰ After this period of rapid proliferation, connections are reduced through a process called pruning, so that brain circuits become more efficient. Sensory pathways like those for basic vision and hearing are the first to develop, followed by early language skills and higher cognitive functions. Connections proliferate and prune in a prescribed order, with later, more complex brain circuits built upon earlier, simpler circuits. Socioeconomic disadvantage and stress in early childhood is associated with striking differences in cognitive structure and function during a time when dramatic changes are occurring in the brain. It is becoming increasingly apparent that children living in poverty, or in materially sufficient but emotionally deprived circumstances, may see delayed or diminished development of their language, memory, and executive functions. In other words, diminished life experiences literally result in diminished and less effective brain architecture. Their ability to respond to, and recover from, adversity is also compromised, reinforcing the understanding that resilient children seem to be made, not born.⁵¹

We have each been designed to constantly learn and grow and to find ways of expressing our own unique identity and potential within a world of others who are also striving to do the same. Through our genetic codes we also carry forward biological memories that are both individually different and commonly shared. We all, therefore, develop mindsets and dispositions that are uniquely configured to our own biology and the experiences that we have within our own environments. Strong, loving and consistent early relationships, particularly that of parents, but also through high quality early caregivers, can really help to combat the impact of poverty. Governments are increasingly investing in early intervention schemes targeted at disadvantaged families and children, but we urgently need to

explore why so many people are living in poverty and what we can do to improve basic living conditions.⁵² Mother-infant bonds and parenting skills really matter, but reducing inequality and better understanding the reasons behind social deprivation are key to solving the problem.^{53 54}

We now know that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are the single biggest predictor for later problems in adult health and wellbeing and there is enormous global interest in how to protect our youngest children from undue levels of stress. In recent years the Nobel Laureate James Heckman has become an increasingly active voice in highlighting the significant economic and human benefits of investing in the early years.⁵⁵ As he says:

“The rate of return for investment in quality early education for disadvantaged children is 7-10% per annum through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity and reduced crime”.

In 2013, The Wave Trust, in collaboration with the UK’s Department of Education (DfE) produced the Conception to Age 2- Age of Opportunity Report, which asked the question - How advisable is it for national or local policy-making bodies in the UK, with responsibility for child health or welfare, and control over spending, to switch investment more heavily to the early years?⁵⁶ It concluded:

“The short answer is there is general expert consensus that it is somewhere between economically worthwhile and imperative to invest more heavily, as a proportion of both local and national spend, in the very earliest months and years of life.”

Every approach – even the most cautious and circumspect in its recommendations – found that returns on investment on well-designed early years’ interventions significantly exceeded their costs with the benefits ranging from 75% to over 1,000%. Where a whole country had adopted a policy of investment in early years’ prevention, the returns were not merely financial but in strikingly better health for the whole population. The logical links between the investments and the health benefits are described in the ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’ (ACE) studies which reveal that for every 100 cases of child abuse society can expect to pay in middle or old age for (amongst a wide range of physical and mental health consequences):

- one additional case of liver disease
- two additional cases of lung disease
- six additional cases of serious heart disease and
- 16% higher rate of anti-depressant prescriptions (Felitti and Anda, 2009)

In 2017 the UK’s National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) calculated that the estimated average lifetime cost of non-fatal child maltreatment by a primary care-giver was £89,390 (with a 95% certainty that the costs fall between £44,896 and £145, 508).⁵⁷ And in the USA an influential 2012 report concluded that:

*“The total lifetime economic burden resulting from new cases of fatal and nonfatal child maltreatment in the United States in 2008 is approximately \$124 billion. In sensitivity analysis, the total burden is estimated to be as large as \$585 billion”.*⁵⁸

The costs to society are enormous and, as highlighted by the distinguished American paediatrician Dr Robert Heggarty: *“Our goal, as individuals and as a society, must be to help all children achieve optimal function physically, mentally, and socially”*⁵⁹.

In other words, protecting the rights of all children to live meaningful and purposeful lives is essential if we want to see the development of a more peaceful and sustainable world.

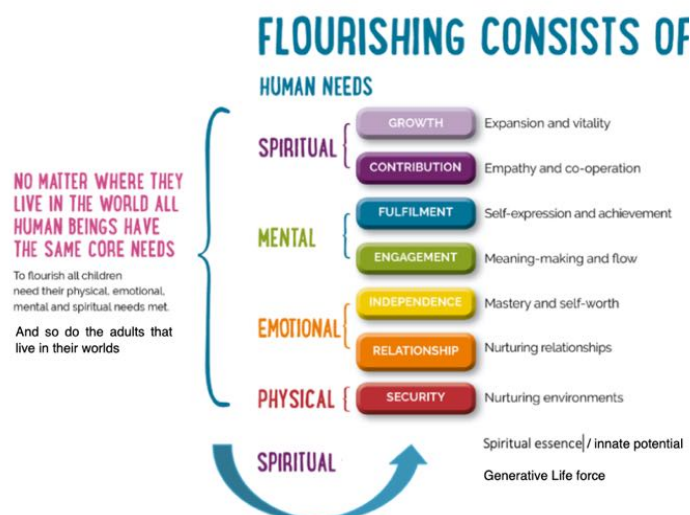
The Seven Core Needs



Fig 5 Flourish Project, 2019

Everyone, therefore, has a unique genetic and environmental background that has shaped who they are and how they feel about the world. Understanding why we are the way we are, and why other people might think and believe differently, is fundamental to the development of a more compassionate world. The model acknowledges that, as human beings, we enter the world with the same seven core needs, which are then reflected in our subsequent values and motivations. Our individual life experiences constantly challenge us to keep these in balance, but when they are satisfied consistently, we are able to flourish in body, heart, mind and soul. The future is always unfolding in us.

Our motivations and behaviours stem from having our needs met (or not) and the values that we develop are then a reflection of these needs. They encompass the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of what it is to be human and they include: **Security, Relationship, Independence, Engagement, Fulfilment, Contribution and Growth**. The fulfilment of the first two levels is essential for subsequent learning and growth, which is why human beings are so compromised by impoverished environments, poor health and a lack of positive relationships. It is also why, in later life, as we let go of the need to perform and succeed in external environments and become increasingly reliant on others, these two again become so important.



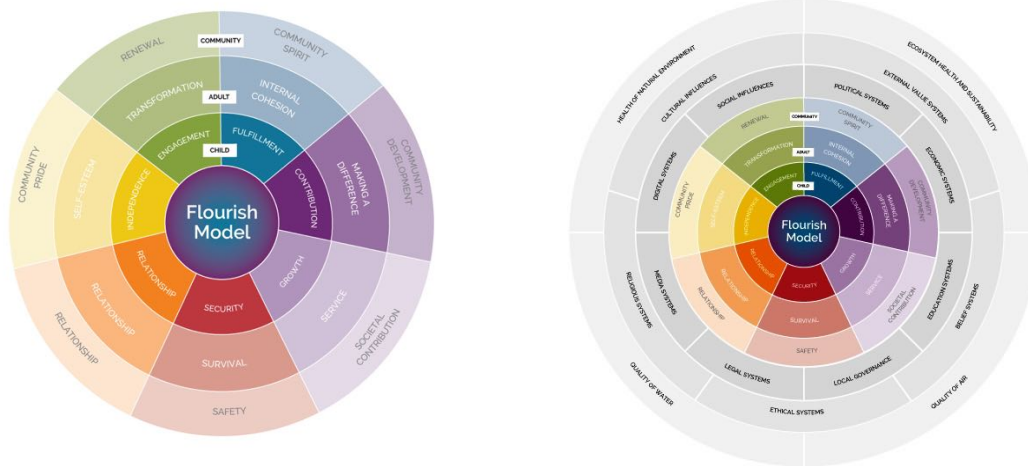
As we grow, we start to create a layer of beliefs about the way the world works that shape our worldviews and impact our natural development. These then become our personal mindsets and the lenses through which we interpret everything that happens to us. Depending on our experiences we learn to prioritise and value some needs over others and develop our core life skills in worlds that are very different. If the environments that we grow up in are positive and nurturing we develop healthy mindsets and are able to maximise our natural development and potential in line with our innate dispositions – which helps us to grow up as happy, healthy and fulfilled adults. We are also able to learn and bounce back quickly from any set-backs and failures - which helps us to see them from the perspective of a ‘glass half full’. If we grow up in difficult or stressful environments however, our natural development is sacrificed and we adopt limiting belief and value systems that help us to survive, but at the same time compromise our ability to become happy, healthy adults. We personalize and struggle with any set-backs and failures – which make us see them from the perspective of a ‘glass half empty’.

7 LEVELS	NATURAL GROWTH: Positive mindsets and dispositions and the healthy development of the system as a whole	UNNATURAL GROWTH: Potentially limiting mindsets and dispositions and the compromised development of the system as a whole
GROWTH	Passion, Purpose, Expansion, Vitality, Abundance, Wisdom, Sense of Wonder, Awe, Love	Disconnection, Flatness, Lack of Meaning, Lack of Purpose, Sense of Loss, Sadness, Isolation, Diminishment, Stagnation, Anger
CONTRIBUTION	Feeling that you matter, Having a Voice, Sense of Connection, Collaboration, Caring for Others, Empathy, Openness, Inclusion, Trust, Compassion, Humility	Feeling no-one cares, Anger, Frustration, Self-interest, Self-focus, Lack of concern for others, Greed, Arrogance, Superiority, Contempt
FULFILMENT	Self Expression, Self Reflection, Flow, Thrill, Satisfaction, Authenticity, Integrity, Joy, Contentment	Boredom, Frustration, Lack of Interest, Apathy, Avoidance, Greed, Unhappiness, Discontentment, Depression
ENGAGEMENT	Personal Challenge, Concentration, Play, Risk-taking, Problem-Solving, Excitement, Creativity, Curiosity, Desire to Explore, Desire to Learn, Resilience, Optimism	External Control, Rigidity, Predictability, Anxiety, Caution, Comfort with the Known, Addiction, Measurability, External Motivation, Need for Rewards, Pessimism
INDEPENDENCE	Self Mastery, Self Regulation, Internal Discipline, Physical Achievement, Positive Body Image, Intrinsic Motivation, Confidence, Challenge as Learning, Knowledge	Reliance on Others, External Discipline, Duty, Impatience, Passivity, Confusion, Self-Doubt, Negative Body Image, Fear of Failure, Inferiority, Value linked to things, Challenge as Threat, Lack
RELATIONSHIP	Nurturing, Care, Affection, Attention, Feedback, Support, Validation, Patience, Respect, Satisfaction, Emotional Fulfilment, Humour, Laughter	Neglect, Lack of Attention, Lack of Connection, Isolation, Abuse, Exclusion, Distrust, Control, Undermining, Disrespect, Dislike, Dissatisfaction, Loneliness
SECURITY	Safety, Positive Contact with Environment, Health, Positive Physical Growth, Positive Neurological Growth, Familiarity, Comfort, Connection to Nature	Threat, Insecurity, Negative contact with Environment, Fear, Disassociation, Vulnerability, Compromised Physical Growth, Compromised Neurological Growth

Fig 7, Flourish Project, 2019

We carry forward not only the impact of adverse experiences that have happened in our own lives, but also the impact of living with adults who are repeating the patterns of the past. Which is why, if we care about the wellbeing of children, we must also be concerned about the wellbeing of the adults with whom they spend their time and the systems that are impeding their own ability to flourish. The health and wellbeing of parents, carers, families, teachers, communities and the planet itself is, therefore, essential to the healthy development and wellbeing of children.

The model recognises that whole, happy humans create thriving, compassionate communities, which then underpin strong and united nations to sustain a healthy, flourishing planet. It enables individuals and leaders to better understand, measure and manage the elements that underpin human vitality and wellbeing and offers a very practical approach to the assessment of needs and the promotion of both individual and community resilience and cohesion. As such, it is implemented as a triple wellbeing framework that puts the biological and spiritual rights of the child firmly at the centre of the system and that acknowledges the interpenetrating relationship of Self, Others and the Natural World.



Figs 8 and 9 Flourish Project 2019

The 'Ecological Self'

One unified relational field

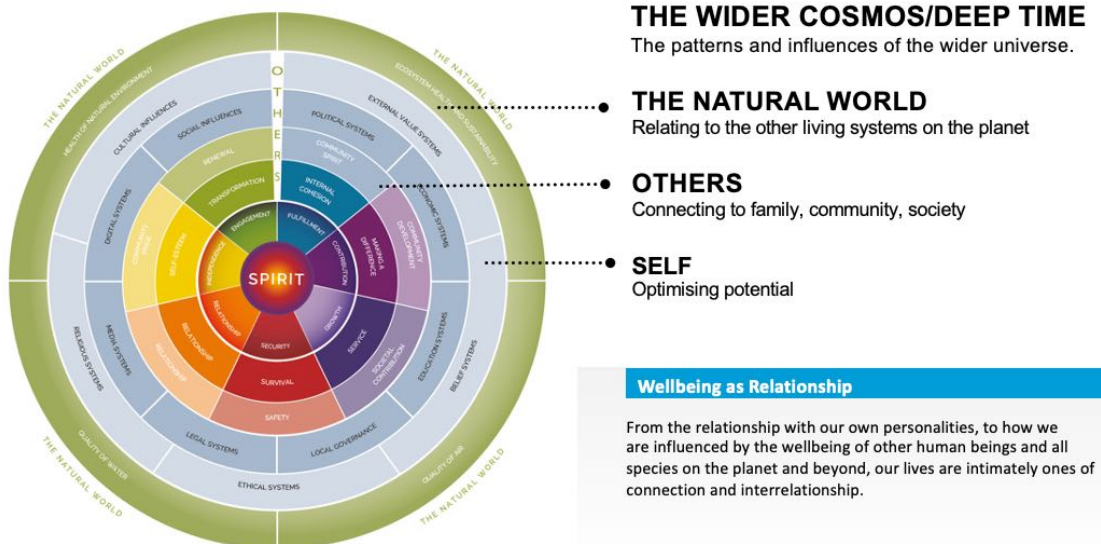


Fig 10, Flourish Project 2019

In showing that compassion itself has a triple aspect, the model provides an evidence-based framework that endorses both the Charter for Compassion and Reboot the Future's call to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.^{60 61}

"We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and

indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.” – Charter for Compassion 2020

Compassion for the Self

- Understanding why we are the way we are and the value of self-kindness
- Recognising suffering within ourselves and others
- Responding to difficult and conflicting feelings and emotions

Compassion for Others

- Understanding that other people see the world differently from ourselves Understanding that values, beliefs and behaviours are a reflection of genes, cultures and lived experiences
- Recognising the universality of human suffering

Compassion for the Natural World

- Understanding that everything is interconnected and that we share responsibility for creating a world fit for children
- Being motivated to act to prevent damage, alleviate suffering and protect future generations

Conclusion

As an innovative new wellbeing framework, the model contributes a unique method for assessing and promoting the wellbeing of systems. It spans the whole of human life, from conception through childhood, right through to the wisdom of ‘elderhood’ and the legacy that we leave behind for future generations. It provides tools, resources and indicators that enhance societal wellbeing, but that also promote our shared humanity. Through being implemented as an ecological model it shows that the same core principles can be applied to any human system, that there is a natural intelligence that is always trying to bring us into integration and wholeness, and that the spirit of the child is the source of the emergent, generative creativity that we need to flourish as a species, in touch with ourselves, each other and this beautiful planet that we live on.



Individuals

The model provides an easy-to-use framework to evaluate personal values and wellbeing, to help people better understand why they are the way they are, to identify personal strengths and weaknesses and to empower a sense of personal agency.

Families

The model aims to help families think about the generational patterns and the environmental factors that have shaped their own values, beliefs and mindsets. It opens up conversations, helps shape and contextualise personal stories, and engages whole families in a discussion about what creates healthy, happy lives and how to overcome the barriers to achieving them.

Schools

A school is more than just teachers and students. Instead it is a complex network of people, all of whom share the hugely important role of ensuring that future generations can grow up to become knowing, caring and thoughtful people, who are in tune with themselves, with others and with the natural world. The model engages schools in an exploration about human values and what really makes for good and meaningful lives. It explores big questions and future solutions, promotes empathy and deep-thinking and empowers students to make the personal choices that help to shape the future that they want, rather than the one that is imposed upon them.

Communities

Healthy environments are essential for flourishing communities. We are all nurtured and sustained by the way we feel about ourselves and where we live, and our ability to trust, respect and celebrate one another. Communities are defined by common interests, whether it be physical location, spiritual belief, faith group, sexual identity or stage of life. Each holds an enormous array of talent, skill and experience relating to how people live and how they can contribute to making things even better for themselves and those around them. The model supports communities in identifying their strengths, isolating areas that would benefit from specific focus and attention and promoting participation and compassionate action. It invites entire communities into a dialogue about what makes a good life and how we can work together to create a flourishing future.

Care Homes

The model enables those caring for the older members of society to measure and sustain the values and ethos of individual settings, to support and enhance the wellbeing of managers and team members, to better underpin and sustain the health and wellbeing of residents and to ensure the cultivation of cultures of dignity, compassion and respect.

Cities

The model helps decision makers to understand, nurture and assess the local conditions that underpin the health of the city as a whole. Through actively engaging communities, and encouraging the creation of social hubs, it helps join up the dots, identify the gaps and develop practical solutions by working from the grassroots up. It works with leaders, policymakers and citizens to better understand and promote the health and wellbeing of their own communities and populations. It helps to ensure that child and family wellbeing and resilience is at the heart of all local decision-making and assists

cities and local authorities to become Centres of Flourishing. Above all, it underpins the call for a more caring and compassionate world.

Nations

A system of economic governance aimed at promoting wellbeing needs to account for all of the impacts (both positive and negative) of economic activity. This includes valuing goods and services derived from a healthy society (social capital) and a thriving biosphere (natural capital). The model helps to shift economies away from a narrow focus on marketed goods and services (i.e. GDP) to one focused on the sustainability of the planet and the need for a deeper 'Ecology of Wellbeing'. It provides a structured underpinning to the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and, most importantly, puts the best interests of the child and wellbeing of future generations at the centre of all decision-making.

In this respect, significant innovation is already happening world-wide and the Flourish Model hopes to contribute its own thinking to the ecosystem of relevant stakeholders that have recently been forming around the following core areas of focus:

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Flourish Project Level 1

Environmental Sustainability air, energy, food, water, clothing, consumables

SDGs: 6) Clean Water and Sanitation 7) Affordable and Clean Energy 14) Life Below Water 15) Life on Land 16) Climate Action 17) Partnership for the Goals

CIRCULAR AND REGENERATIVE ECONOMICS

Flourish Project Level 1

Economic transformation regenerative economies, sustainable business, sustainable design, sustainable architecture, from old to new forms of power

SDGs 1) No Poverty 2) Zero Hunger 8) Decent Work and Economic Growth 9) Industry Innovation and Infrastructure 12) Responsible Production and Consumption 17) Partnership for the Goals

HUMAN CAPACITIES AND POTENTIAL

Flourish Project Levels 2,3,4,5,6,7

Promotion of Wellbeing optimising early human development, promoting global equality and social mobility, promoting lifelong learning, ensuring local resilience and adaptability, promoting a peaceful world, education systems, social and emotional development, mental health, spiritual health, values based approaches, wellbeing frameworks and indicators

SDGs: 3) Good Health and Wellbeing 4) Quality Education 17) Partnership for the Goals

CULTURAL VALUES AND IDENTITY

Flourish Project Levels 6,7

Community Participation participative and regenerative communities, community wealth building, female empowerment, religion, faith-based approaches, compassion-based approaches, citizen hubs, youth councils

SDGs: 5) Gender Equality 10) Reducing Inequality 16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions 17) Partnership for the Goals

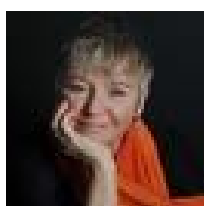
“We cannot doubt that we have been given the intellectual vision, the spiritual insight, and even the physical resources we need for carrying out the transition that is demanded of these times, transition from the period when humans were a disruptive force on the planet Earth to the period when humans become present to the planet in a manner that is mutually enhancing.”

Thomas Berry, the Great Work

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The Flourish Values Model (FVM) is a new and powerful framework for understanding and mapping human values and wellbeing that promotes community engagement and whole-systems thinking www.flourishproject.net