

# Wellbeing Library

We've assembled a rich library of the most cutting-edge positive psychology information designed to extend the impact of the wellbeing assessment and Four Pillars lessons. Each Wikipedia-style article was written and curated by our expert educators, curriculum developers, psychologists, and neuroscientists from around the world. The 48 subjects in our library are anchored on foundational concepts in physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing approaches.

## Physical Health

1. Diet
2. Exercise
3. Hydration
4. Immune System
5. Bodily Comfort
6. Substance Independence
7. Sleep
8. Rest & Leisure

## Community Climate

17. Relationship with Satisfaction
18. Bullying Buffer & Safety
19. Agreements & Trust
20. Compassion
21. Belonging
22. Collaboration
23. Appreciation
24. Selfless Service Mindset

## Relationship to Experiences

33. Contentment
34. Environmental Mastery
35. Growth Mindset
36. Appreciation of Enough
37. Situational Gratitude
38. Psychological Flexibility
39. Emotional Balance
40. Healthy Responsibility

## Psychological Wellbeing

9. Satisfaction with Life
10. Personal Autonomy
11. Stress Buffer
12. Purpose in Life
13. Burnout Buffer
14. Mindfulness (Emotional Awareness)
15. Focus & Flow (Acting with Awareness)
16. Emotional Wellness

## Inner Climate

25. Self-Compassion
26. Self-Curiosity
27. Self-Gratitude
28. Unconditional Self-Acceptance
29. Self-Observation
30. Understanding Emotions
31. Experiential Awareness
32. Personal Growth

## Educational Efficacy

41. Job Satisfaction
42. Teacher Efficacy
43. Educational Quality
44. Leadership Strength
45. Classroom Behavior
46. Classroom Resources
47. Personal Resources
48. Team Quality

## What is contentment?

Contentment is our felt sense of unconditional completeness regardless of circumstance. It is, “an emotion that sits at the deepest core of human wellbeing and is foundational to the experience of fulfilment in life.”<sup>1</sup> Contentment is available to us at any given moment, whether we experience our present moment as pleasant or unpleasant. Contentment can neither be given to us nor taken away; it must be found within through introspection and self-awareness. This sustainable form of wellbeing involves feeling whole and enough exactly where we are.

Many of us have been taught to seek wellbeing outside of us. We learn to pursue what feels pleasant while minimizing discomfort. Yet, life often does not accord with these preferences, instead offering a variety of emotional experiences. The most valuable wellbeing tool, therefore, is our ability to unconditionally accept all experiences as they arise. When we notice an emotional experience, we accept and appreciate it for what it is and for the wisdom it offers us.

Unlike complacency and indifference, contentment, “generates an internal foundation of well-being that allows [us] to engage [our] lived experience more fully.”<sup>2</sup> Similar to appreciation of enough, contentment acknowledges that outer happenings can play out in any arrangement and we will continue to be well inside. Contentment includes the sense that we are home in ourselves and the understanding that we are all we have ever searched for.

Contentment is a form of self-generated wellness that has been discussed across traditions, cultures, and disciplines for over 5,000 years.<sup>3</sup> In this equanimity, we can rest in the peace and joy within us and allow all feelings to arise naturally inside. While experiences come and go, contentment is always here—a sanctuary we can return to at any given moment.

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<sup>1</sup> Cordaro, D. T., Brackett, M., Glass, L., & Anderson, C. L. (2016). Contentment: Perceived completeness across cultures and traditions. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(3), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Glass, L. (2018). *Contentment and Mindfulness: Expanding Freedom for Prisoners*. Dartmouth College.

<sup>3</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.



## What are the benefits of contentment?

Contentment itself is extremely satisfying and supportive of our overall wellbeing. Those who regularly experience contentment benefit from significant improvements in life satisfaction<sup>4</sup> and the development of, “physical, intellectual, social, and psychological resources.”<sup>5,6</sup> Contentment can be experienced simultaneously with other emotions and decreases stress and anxiety. This sense of wholeness is also associated with decreased heart rate and increased overall physiological relaxation.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

Contentment also expands our awareness, flow, skill-building, and creativity in recognizing possibilities.<sup>10</sup> We experience greater self-regulation, academic improvement, psychological flexibility, acceptance of what is, and mood improvement.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

This grounding emotion provides a sense of impenetrable wellness, and “broadens by creating the urge to savor current life circumstances and integrate these circumstances into new views of self and of the world.”<sup>14</sup> Contentment improves our feelings of connection with others and that which is beyond ourselves.<sup>15,16</sup> When we practice contentment, we fundamentally change the mechanism by which we relate to our experience—we enhance our unconditional self-acceptance, gratitude, and sense of inner peace.<sup>17</sup>

## How can I improve my contentment?

Try these methods of expanding your contentment:

- [\*Understand your enoughness\*](#). Consider all of the ways that you are perfect as you are, without the need to be or do anything. Practice appreciation and gratitude for what you have accomplished in life, and what you have access to right now. Remind yourself that what you have now, you once had only hoped for.

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<sup>5</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (1998). Cultivated emotions: Parental socialization of positive emotions and self-conscious emotions. *Psychological Inquiry*, 9, 279–281.

<sup>6</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Kreibig, S. D. (2010). Autonomic nervous system activity in emotion: A review. *Biological psychology*, 84(3), 394-421.

<sup>8</sup> Johnstone, T., & Scherer, K. R. (1999, August). The effects of emotions on voice quality. In *Proceedings of the XIVth international congress of phonetic sciences* (pp. 2029-2032). San Francisco: University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>9</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.





- *Exercise your contentment.* Tools can guide us toward contentment, though only we can offer ourselves access to indestructible wellness. Sit with yourself for a moment. Imagine that you have left your ideas about life, what it has been or should be, in the other room or elsewhere. Let memories, desires, challenges, and beliefs shift away for the moment. Settle into the awareness that you are just here. Only you are here, as you most deeply are. What is this experience of you? What is this you-ness that is here? What feelings arise for you here, when you are simply here and available to yourself? Connect to the inner peace and unconditional embrace that is at your core.
- *Write about your relationship to contentment.* Consider journaling about the following: What has my relationship to contentment been like so far? When do I experience contentment? Where does it show up in my body? Do other emotions often accompany contentment for me? When I feel contentment, how does that affect my thoughts and actions? How long does the experience usually last? In what circumstances would I like to experience contentment more often or more fully? How can I expand my experience of contentment?
- *Engage life at its own pace.* When busy thinking about the past or future, we are often in a hurry to arrange things to be other than they are. Arrive in this present moment and breath into it. Direct your attention inside and discover that all is well as it is, right now. Make a commitment to yourself to regularly bring yourself and your awareness into the present fully and allow contentment to enter.

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<sup>10</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Sigfsdttir, I. D., & Allegrante, J. P. (2009). Adolescent health behavior, contentment in school, and academic achievement. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 33(1), 69-79.

<sup>12</sup> Rojas, M., & Veenhoven, R. (2013). Contentment and affect in the estimation of happiness. *Social Indicators Research*, 110(2), 415-431.

<sup>13</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American psychologist*, 56(3), 218.

<sup>15</sup> Sinnott, J. D., & Berlanstein, D. (2006). The importance of feeling whole: Learning to “feel connected”, community, and adult development. *Handbook of adult development and learning*, 381-406.

<sup>16</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Cordaro et al., 2016.





## Which lessons in the 4PWB curriculum relate to contentment?

All lessons from the Contentment Pillar

Mindfulness Lesson 8: Mindfulness of Thoughts

Mindfulness Lesson 9: Mindfulness of Emotions

Mindfulness Lesson 15: Mindfulness in Everyday Life

Community Lesson 7: Loving Kindness

Community Lesson 8: Showing and Receiving Gratitude

Self-Curiosity Lesson 4: Emotions as Perspectives

Self-Curiosity Lesson 8: Self-Curiosity in Everyday Life

## Where can I go to learn even more?

### Books

Simplify Your Life: 100 Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy the Things That Really Matter

by Elaine St. James

<https://amzn.to/2Awvabx>

The Little Book of Contentment

by Leo Babauta

<https://amzn.to/2F59UMT>

(A public PDF version: <https://bit.ly/2Ax624i>)

### Videos

A TEDx Talk from a junior in high school: *"To React, or Not to React - That is the Question"*

by Riya Shah

<https://bit.ly/2BX5eWn>

A talk on *"Hardwiring Happiness"*

by Rick Hanson

<https://bit.ly/2yRsbYi>

### Articles

Equanimity is yoga for the brain

by Traci Abram <https://bit.ly/2CKXx7i>





Curious about what different traditions have said about contentment? Explore the following academic article

by Contentment Foundation CEO Daniel Cordaro, Mark Brackett, and Lauren Glass

<https://bit.ly/2Apt8d0>

## Sources

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