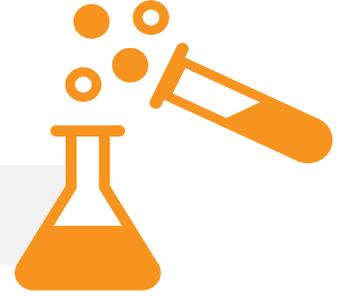


# WELL-BEING LAB:



## ■ Turning Knowing into Doing with Playful Experimentation



### A FRESH START

- Feeling frustrated that your New Year's resolution to be healthier fizzled out by May? Welcome to the Well-Being Lab: Your fresh start to make sustainable change for greater well-being. Let's put the guilt and failures behind us and celebrate our chance to start again using a different approach.



### PERSONALIZING YOUR APPROACH

- Although science tells us which well-being strategies benefit people "on average," it doesn't guarantee that they'll work for you. Or that they'll work forever.
- Also, most of us know many things we should do to protect and promote our well-being. But busy lives and ingrained habits (which differ for us all) get in the way.
- Because everyone is different, there are no one-size-fits all strategies for mental health and happiness. This means that we each need to figure out what works for us and how to sustainably integrate it into our own complicated, changing lives. How do we do this? Self-experiments can help.



### WHAT ARE WELL-BEING SELF-EXPERIMENTS?

- The gist of self-experimentation is to try different things, figure out what's working for you, and then keep doing things that work.
- Trying out new ways of behaving, thinking, and feeling also helps us grow generally. We become more mindful, expand our behavioral options, and develop greater flexibility to more effectively choose how to buffer adversity and boost well-being in our ever-changing lives.



### START YOUR SELF-EXPERIMENTS: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

You can design and conduct your own well-being self-experiment in six steps:

#### 1. Pick Your Experiment

- **Use the Worksheets Provided**
  - **Worksheet #1:** Design your own experiment.
  - **Other Worksheets:** Use a pre-made experiment.
- **How to Choose**
  - Choose an activity that aligns with a personal well-being goal you truly care about.
  - **Start Easy & Enjoyable:** Pick something realistic and achievable. Think of it as a sliding scale—the more enjoyable the activity (like a short walk), the more likely you are to stick with it.

#### 2. Plan for Success

- **Schedule Your Success:** Decide exactly when and how you'll do your chosen activity.
- **Reminders Are Your Friends:** Set alarms, use sticky notes, or ask a friend to remind you.
- **Create Mental Prompts:** Use "if-then" statements to trigger your activity. For example, "If I finish lunch, I'll take a walk."

#### 3. Get a Baseline

- **Measure Your Starting Point:** Before you begin, take a quick measure of your starting point (examples in the Appendix) to assess your current well-being in your chosen area. This will help you track progress later.

#### 4. Run Your Experiment

- **Take Action:** Now, it's time to put your plan into practice.
- **Celebrate Every Win:** Every time you complete your activity, celebrate! Smile in the mirror, high five your pet, do a dance—do *something* to genuinely boost positive emotions. (In *Tiny Habits*, Dr. BJ Fogg emphasizes that celebration is an essential part of the process. Don't skip it!).

#### 5. Track Your Progress (Optional)

- **Monitor:** Every week (or however often you choose), track how you're doing.
- **Focus on Progress, Not Perfection:** If measurement feels overwhelming, stop doing it. It's better to keep going than give up.

#### 6. Reflect, Refine, Repeat

- **Learn from the Experience:** Reflect on your experiment and well-being.
- **Ask Yourself Questions:**
  - What worked well? What could be improved?
  - Can you easily fit this activity into your life?
  - Do you need to adjust the activity to make it easier or more fun?
  - Did the prompts work for you?
- **Make Adjustments & Repeat:** Based on your reflection, refine your experiment, and start again!

**Remember:** This is **your** self-experiment. It's about what works best for **you**. There will be bumps along the road, but by following these steps, you'll be well on your way to achieving your well-being goals!



# WELL-BEING LAB

## SELF-EXPERIMENT WORKSHEETS

### WORKSHEET #1: *Create Your Own Well-Being Self-Experiment*

This Worksheet walks you through eight steps to design your own Well-Being Self-Experiment from scratch.



#### STEP 1. *Choose a Category and Goal for Improvement.*

First, pick a category on which you'd like to focus to bolster your well-being. We're focusing here on Self-Experiments in our nonwork lives, but you should feel free to Self-Experiment at work as well.

- **Personal Growth:** Activities aimed at continuous learning and growth on topics we value; developing our intellect, interpersonal skills, or creativity; or improving our physical environment.
- **Physical Health:** Activities to improve physical health—e.g., physical fitness, nutrition, restorative sleep, reducing harmful substance use.
- **Psychological Strengths:** Activities that cultivate psychological resources that help us manage stress, overcome obstacles, achieve our goals, and improve well-being (e.g., psychological flexibility, emotion regulation, mindfulness, self-talk, optimism, self-efficacy).
- **Relationships:** Activities that connect us to others (e.g., friends, family), show that we care, enable others to care for us, enhance a sense of belonging.
- **Relaxation/Leisure:** Activities for relaxation and recovery or fun and flow.
- **Social Engagement & Community Service:** Activities aimed at connecting with or serving our communities.
- **Transcendent Activities:** Activities that make us feel part of something larger than ourselves or a sense of awe, cultivate a sense of meaning and purpose, connect us with our spirituality, or align our lives with our core values.

**Now, clarify your aspiration or outcome. Write it down.**

- For example, you might pick Psychological Strengths as a category in which you'd like to improve and identify being more mindful as an aspiration.
- Be sure to ask if that's what you really mean. Do you want to be more mindful or reduce stress in your life? The latter aspiration gives you more behavioral options (with enhancing mindfulness as just one strategy) when you start selecting specific behaviors or activities for your experiment.



#### STEP 2. *Get a Well-Being Baseline.*

- **Measure Your Starting Point:** Before you begin, take a quick measure of your starting point (examples in the Appendix) to assess your current well-being in your chosen area. This will help you track progress later.



### STEP 3. *Brainstorm a Batch of Activity Ideas.*

Now, write down ten or more specific behaviors that would lead you toward your aspiration. You might want to do some research to help you identify potentially effective behaviors.

This is a brainstorming exercise; you're not making any commitments yet. So, try to be open-minded and exploratory. The more ideas you can come with—including breadth and variety—the more flexibility you'll have in how you make progress.

**For example, if your aspiration is to get more sleep at night, 10 specific behaviors might include:**

1. Putting your phone on airplane mode after 8:00 pm,
2. Installing blackout shades in the bedroom,
3. Putting on blue light-blocking glasses three hours before bedtime,
4. Purchasing better bedding,
5. Not drinking alcohol within four hours of bedtime,
6. Taking a melatonin supplement one hour before bedtime,
7. Committing to a 15-minute wind-down ritual each night,
8. Going to bed at the same time every night
9. Eating dinner an hour earlier, or
10. Turning on a white noise machine at night.

Two of the behaviors listed above are “installing blackout shades” and “purchasing better bedding.” Compare these to, for example, “making my bedroom more conducive to sleep”—which is a desired outcome *not* a behavior. We're after specific *behaviors*.

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### STEP 4. *Choose An Activity.*

Look through your list from Step 3 and pick three that you'll try out.  
Pick activities that:

- You believe will be effective ways to make progress toward your well-being aspiration.
- You can easily get yourself to do—because you *want* to do them, they're *easy* for you to do, and they're well within your *ability* and *resources*. Think of these elements like a sliding scale. The less you want to do an activity (e.g., jog 3 miles at 6 am), the smaller you should start (e.g., walk around the block at 6 am)—or you won't do it. Think *small*.
- Pair your activity (walking after lunch) with something else that you enjoy (listening to books/podcasts).



## STEP 5. *Plan For Success.*

- **Schedule Your Success:** Decide exactly when and how you'll do your chosen activity.
  - **Reminders Are Your Friends:** Set alarms, use sticky notes, or ask a friend to remind you.
  - **Create Mental Prompts:** Use "if-then" statements to trigger your activity. For example, "Every time I go to the restroom, I'll do two squats"; "As soon as I finish my lunch, I'll go outside to walk around the block"; "As soon as I finish my coffee, I'll write down three things I'll do today to practice the emotion of joy."
  - **Connect With Others.** Recruit other people to join you in your activity—which may boost your adherence to your plan.
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## STEP 6. *Run Your Experiment...and Celebrate It!*

- **Take Action:** Now, it's time to put your plan into practice.
  - **Celebrate Every Win:** Every time you complete your activity, celebrate!
    - Smile in the mirror, high five your pet, do a victory dance, give yourself a mental pat on the back, eat a little piece of chocolate, read five pages of your favorite book, listen to your favorite song—do *something* to genuinely boost positive emotions.
    - This will help wire the activity into your brain as something enjoyable rather than something to avoid. (In *Tiny Habits*, Dr. BJ Fogg emphasizes that celebration is an essential part of the process. Don't skip it!).
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## STEP 7. *Track Your Progress (Optional)*

- **Monitor:** Every week (or however often you choose), track how you're doing.
- **Focus on Progress, Not Perfection:** If measurement feels overwhelming, stop doing it. It's better to keep going than give up.



## STEP 8. *Reflect, Revise, & Redo.*

- **Learn From the Experience:** We don't learn from experience; we learn from *reflecting* on experience. Step 8 encourages you to take time to reflect on the activity and your well-being. Consider what adjustments are needed to your Self-Experiment, make them, and start again.
- **Ask Yourself Questions:**
  - What went well? What didn't?
  - What do you want to keep doing? What do you want to change?
  - Have you been able to work the activity into your life? Why or why not? Can you adjust it to better fit your circumstances? Do you need to make it easier—by making it smaller or more fun?
  - Do you need to adopt more effective prompts?
  - Do you need to learn more about something or acquire additional resources to tweak the Self-Experiment?
  - Has your well-being and satisfaction with your area of focus improved? If yes, how can you continue to capitalize on these improvements? If not, what adjustments may be needed?
  - Are there alternative explanations (other than your Self-Experiment) for why your well-being improved or declined? There could be another factor that caused you to enjoy (or not) a day, week, or month. Watching out for such extraneous factors can help you determine which activities are a poor fit for you and which deserve a second try. (For example, if you only walk outside when you're already feeling energetic or when it's sunny outside, then it's harder to determine if the walk *caused* an energy boost.)

# WELL-BEING LAB

## ADDITIONAL WORKSHEETS

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*If you'd like to choose a pre-made experiment rather than design your own from scratch, you can choose from the online Worksheets listed below. Remember that there's no one-size-fits-all tool. So, still think about how you can tailor these activities to best fit your needs and circumstances.*

### **WORKSHEET #2: Vanquishing Languishing**

You can find the Vanquishing Languishing Worksheet [here](#). You'll try out "behavioral activation" techniques to add more enjoyment and values-drive activities and reduce feelings of stagnation and emptiness.

### **WORKSHEET #3: Active Constructive Responding**

You can find an Active Constructive Responding (ACR) Worksheet created by the Uniformed Services University [here](#). Reacting with enthusiasm to other people's good news builds trust, connection, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction.

### **WORKSHEET #4: Expressive Writing**

You can find an expressive writing exercise [here](#). Writing can be a fun and engaging leisure activity, but it also can be used as a tool to bolster mental health.

### **WORKSHEET #5: Creating Kindness in the Workplace**

Random Acts of Kindness.org created an Action Planning Guide for cultivating more kindness in the workplace, which can be found [here](#). It includes seven steps toward greater kindness to create workplaces where colleagues feel more connected, have a sense of purpose, and are appreciated and recognized for their contributions.

### **WORKSHEET #6: Savoring Positive Experiences**

You can find a Savoring Positive Emotions Worksheet [here](#). Savoring boosts mental health by increasing positive emotions, deepening gratitude, facilitating mindfulness, enhancing engagement, and adding greater meaning in our lives.

### **WORKSHEET # 7: Practice Positive Emotions**

You can find a Pick & Practice Positive Emotions Worksheet [here](#). Intentionally practicing different positive emotions can increase the experience of meaning, pleasure, engagement and life satisfaction and curb depressive symptoms. "Emodiversity" boosts health, so try practicing a new emotion each week.

### **WORKSHEET #8: Alcohol Reduction Workbook**

To experiment with an alcohol free (or damp) May, you can find an Alcohol Reduction Self-Awareness workbook created by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Nicotine Dependence Service [here](#).

### **WORKSHEET #9: Sleep Improvement**

You can find a Sleep Worksheet created by the University of Michigan [here](#). Getting enough restorative sleep everyday (or as often as possible) is strongly related to mental and physical health and ability to regulate emotions.

### **WORKSHEET #10: Using Your Strengths in New Ways**

Worksheets that will guide you in identifying and using your character strengths in new ways can be found [here](#). Hundreds of studies have found that, when we consciously use character strengths more and in new ways, we experience better mental health and job and life satisfaction.

### **ABA WORKSHEETS**

The ABA's freely available [Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers & Legal Employers](#) contains 17 worksheets (which start on page 43).

# APPENDIX

## MEASURING YOUR PROGRESS

Below are some examples of items to measure progress on your Well-Being Self-Experiment. Choose, discard, or add what you like. If you find a measurement practice too tough to sustain, then drop it. Maybe try again in the future.

\*Scales in this Appendix were adapted from Richards et al. (2024). More measurement options can be found in the [ABA Well-Being Toolkit](#), including University of Pennsylvania's [Authentic Happiness website](#).

### Examples of After-Activity Questions

EXAMPLES OF AFTER-ACTIVITY QUESTIONS	RESPONSES 1=Not at All; 9=Very much
How much enjoyment did you experience from this activity?	1-9
How much did the activity energize you?	1-9
After the activity, how much pride did you feel?	1-9
How much did you feel a sense of mastery while performing this activity?	1-9
How much pleasure did you feel while performing the activity?	1-9
How much did you connect with others during this activity?	1-9
How much distress did you experience while performing this activity?	1-9
<b>TOTAL:</b>	

### Examples of After-Activity Reflection Questions

REFLECTION
Were there any factors external to the activity itself that might have affected your activity ratings?
If you want to design a recurring activity: Is there anything you would do to make this activity more comfortable (e.g., natural, easy, streamlined) to perform again in the future? Perhaps there is a smaller version of this activity you could perform more regularly?
Is there any activity related to this one that could bring you similar benefits?

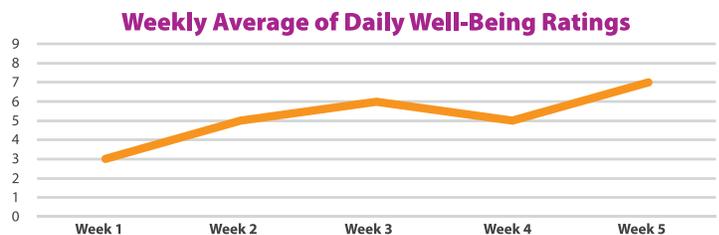
### Examples of Weekly Well-Being Tracking Questions

WEEKLY WELL-BEING QUESTIONS IDEAS	RESPONSES 1=Not at All; 9=Very much
This week I was happy.	1-9
This week I was energized.	1-9
This week I felt interested.	1-9
This week I used my nonwork time well.	1-9
This week I experienced pleasure.	1-9
This week I felt effective.	1-9
This week I connected with others.	1-9
This week I felt bad (e.g., anxious, upset, sad).	1-9 (Reverse)
	1-9
<b>TOTAL:</b>	
SINGLE-ITEM GLOBAL WELL-BEING QUESTION	
Rate your well-being from the past week	1=Very low; 9=Very high

### GRAPHING TRENDS

Consider also tracking changes over the weeks of your experimenting.

- For example, you could rate your global well-being from the past week (1=Very low to 9=Very high) every Saturday before you go to bed.
- Charting your progress will allow you to observe long term patterns, especially when scores are charted. Research has found that using such graphs is reinforcing.



### IN YOUR OWN WORDS: NARRATIVE TRACKING

- If you don't prefer numeric ratings, you can try briefly journaling about your experiences. This might include a few sentences about how the activity went, how it made you feel, what your thoughts and feelings are about the activity. You might try writing just a sentence or two each night before going to bed to track your well-being related to the activity (Richards et al., 2024).

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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