



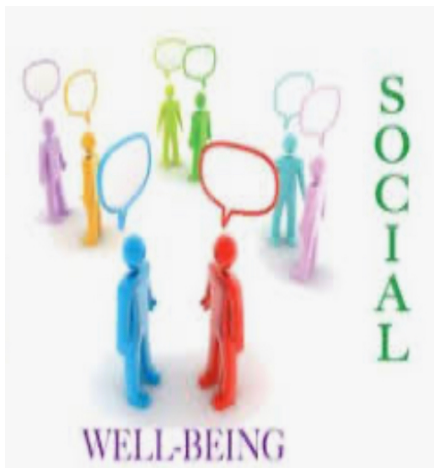
A Self-Enquiry into whether your Physical,
Social and Personal Well-Being are at its peak.

Rethink. Reset. Reboot.

Social Well-Being

In my previous blog, we discussed how physical well-being is important for our bodies to be at their best. We looked at the areas of sleep, nutrition and exercise,. Next, we will be expanding into whether our social well-being is based on a supportive foundation. Social wellbeing is the extent to which you feel a sense of belonging and connectedness with others in society. We as humans are social animals and this cannot be removed from the evolution of an individual. However, during this time of the coronavirus, social distancing has become the new norm. It is something that is affecting how we currently are with limited interactions with others. How have you fared?

If you are alone during this time, it will be natural for you to miss the people that make you feel better. Who have you communicated with across geographical limitations during this time? We are lucky that today, we have a plethora of online tools (WhatsApp, Zoom, Houseparty) or even the normal land line telephones (huh what is that?) to help us remain social. On the other side of the coin, if you have been confined with your family or room-mates, I hope everything went smoothly! I have found that being grateful for the strengths of those around you right now is a positive way to deal with the lack of distance, along with a glass of wine. Jokes aside, being surrounded by supportive family and friends makes life worth living every second.



Social well-being is an integral part of our overall well-being. If we don't have strong relationships in our lives, our ability to thrive is limited. Healthy relationships can help us live longer, manage stress, and become healthier, according to an article published in Harvard Health Publishing 2019. The questions that follow may evoke little distress to some but it is well-worth the time, as part of who we are is affected by who is around us.

A. Family - “You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you as you are to them.

Desmond Tutu

A family constitutes people who are related to each other and share an emotional bond and similar values. Family members can be related by birth, marriage or adoption. Families can contain a fascinating grouping of personalities. Your immediate family includes parents, siblings, spouse and children. Your extended family include people you are related to such as grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles, nephews, nieces, etc. How do you fit in within the context of your family?



- Do you feel comfortable with all members of your family?
- Do you feel important within the context of your family (extended and nuclear)?
- Who within your family makes you feel good about yourself?
- Do you face sibling rivalry? How do you deal with it?
- Do you seek approval from significant members? How does that affect your behaviour around them?
- Are there certain people that rub you the wrong way? How do you deal with them?
- Are you in the middle generation - looking after kids and parents? Do you feel overwhelmed? How are you coping?

- If you are married, does your spouse appreciate you and all the little things you do?
- Do you support your family members with words or gifts of appreciation?
- Is it easy to forgive and make amends with your family members and vice versa?
- How do you feel about opening up to your family about your problems? Is there at least one person you can confide in?

A strong family is all that you need to fight all odds in life. No matter how the day has been for you, no matter how people must have behaved with you, and no matter what problems you have been facing, the smiling face of your partner, parent, sibling or child help you stay balanced. Feeling loved and being an important part of the family unit nourishes us. And after all that is said and done, they are the ones who will always be energetically attached to us. The virtue of loyalty comes from a family.

However, not all of us have perfect families. If you do not get along with a family member it may put undue stress and strain on you and on other people within the family. So what do we do if we have issues with some family members?

According to psychologists, these are the few tips that can help you live with family members who give you stress:

1. Accept the person as they are. Don't try and fix them.. They are who they are and that is something you cannot control. It is also important to get your expectations in check regarding their behaviour.
2. Encourage them to express themselves. Do not get defensive with varied opinions. However, if you do get caught up in an argument the easiest way to deal with it is to BREATHE and take a step back to allow the fire to reduce to sparks. Showing respect for another's differences can go a very long way in the positive direction.



3. Watch for trigger topics. These are the topics that create disagreement and disharmony. Avoid them.

It is important to realise that they are going through their own stresses and the conflict is usually not about you. Learning to accept our family members for who they are gives us the strength to go into the world armed with the ability to deal with anyone. It is definitely okay if we do not get along with everyone. Learning to live with them is the lesson. Family members are our teachers to be better humans. Once we embrace them into our experience, life with them will be bliss.

Family are not the only ones we surround ourselves with, even though at this time they are the only ones that we are physically in touch with and have no choice to exclude. However, I am sure those of you who are living away from home feel connected with your friends/ roommates who are like family. Let's look at how they make up your support system.

B. Friends: “Lots of friends want to ride with you in the limo; but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.”

Oprah Winfrey

Friends are those who we have a bond of mutual affection. The benefits of having good friends are reducing our levels of stress which contributes to better overall health, makes you feel less pain in life both physical and mental, improves your cardiovascular health and helps prolong our lives.

I think having good friends makes life more fun to live. They comfort you in times of sorrow and they give you a true reality check as sometimes we cannot see the folly of our ways.⁵
So how are your friends for you?



- What does friendship mean to you?
- How many friends do you think you have? How many of those would you call when you are in desperate need of help?
- Who have you reached out to via WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, HouseParty or Google Meets?
- How much are you willing to do for your friends? Is there a limit?
- Do they help you when you are in trouble? Who is that one who has always been there?
- Are your friends supportive of you when you succeed in life? Are you supportive of your friends' successes?
- Do they make you feel good about yourself? And do you make the effort to make them feel good about who they are?
- Have you ever talked about your friends behind their backs? Have they done that to you?
- Are there people who you feel jealous about?
- Are there friends who make you feel worse after you have met them? Why are you still keeping them in your life?

What makes a good friend?

1. They allow us to be more accepting of who we are. They show us reality even if we are in a puddle of self-criticism.
2. They are honest with us. They let us know when we are on the wrong track. They keep us humble.



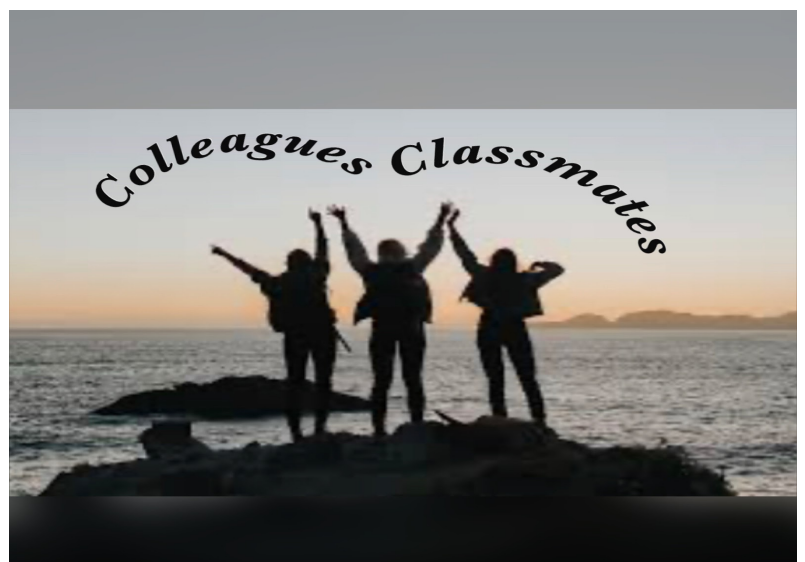
3. They forgive us and accept us for who we are.
4. They give you full attention when they are with you and really listen.. Their phones and other distractions are by the sidelines.
5. They stick by us through the good and the bad times.

Friends come and go in your life and the ones who stick around the longest are the ones who have mutual love and respect for who you are and vice versa. If you are taking stock of the friends you surround yourself with, further introspect on what kind of friend you are. Friends are those that we choose. We should choose them wisely because they shape who we are as a person, as the saying goes, “You are who you are by virtue of the company you keep.” - TB Joshua. Make sure you surround yourself with those who will be by your side during the ups and downs of life. Knowing how trustworthy your friends circle is is extremely important for your social well-being.

Family and friends are the ones that we usually call on when we need help in life. However, they are not the only ones that are within our social networks. Colleagues and classmates are the third section of our social wellbeing pathway that we will take a look into now.

C. Colleagues and Classmates: Great colleagues (and classmates) make work seem like play.

We spend as much or more time at work, based on a 9-5 job or school day) as we do sleeping. Many of us need to interact with others in team exercises or in our workspace in general. Sometimes we find that we have a connection with those we work with and that makes going to work or school a little more fun. The better our relationships are at work or school, the happier and more productive we are going to be. So according to you, how is your well-being when you are with the people you work or study with?



- Do you have anybody you look forward to meeting at work or school?
- Do you hate going to work or school?
- Do you feel stressed out more than you feel at ease around those at work or school, including your boss and your teachers?
- Are people you work with very competitive and you always feel the need to prove your worth?
- Do people gossip behind your back and vice versa?
- Do you feel safe to speak your ideas and be heard when working in a team?
- Do you feel you can learn from those who are above you in the hierarchy? Or are you scared to approach them?
- Are there certain people who rub you the wrong way? How do you usually deal with them? Why do you think that is the case?

Having a group of people that makes going to work like play would be great if it happened for everyone. This greatly depends on the kind of work you are in. If you are in a competitive field, chances are you will be faced with people trying to walk over you, and you have to have the grit to withstand that otherwise work life will be a nightmare. Negative relationships can take its toll on your productivity because you will be spending your energy and time trying to sort out this relationship. Being able to neutralise difficult co-workers is one of the greatest gifts to have under your belt. How do you work with people you do not like?



1. Be calm. Take a breath. Someone who is calm is seen as being in control, centered and more respectable.
2. Understand their intentions. What is stopping them from cooperating with you? And on the flip side, what is stopping you from cooperating with them?
3. Communicate your side in a neutral factual way and let their side be heard as well. Mutual respect for each other can help build a better rapport with your colleagues and classmates.
4. Focus on what can be actioned upon. Stay away from the emotional onslaught. Acknowledge the situation at hand, focus on what you can do and control and change to get to a solution.
5. If all else fails, ignore them or escalate to HR or to your teacher/ principal.

If you can work effectively with people you do not like, you will reduce your own stress, and enjoy work a lot more. This also opens you up for promotions because you will be seen as an important team player. The ability to manage your emotions and remain calm at work or school will have a direct link to your performance. Controlling emotional outbursts and impulses is a very important trait to ensure success. Many sports athletes practice this. Take Roger Federer who is ranked no 4 in the world of tennis as an example. If you've seen him play, you will notice that he rarely has outbursts unlike the other tennis players. That way he keeps his cool and is able to focus on the ball. Controlling your emotions is something that you can train with mindfulness. Practice taking breaths every time you feel yourself getting irritated or frustrated at work by adding some space between your trigger and the reaction. This lessens the intensity of your feeling and you are able to see things more clearly. Yes this is tougher than it sounds but with practice, you will find your happy space at work.

Strong, healthy social relationships are important throughout life. In the present situation, we are advised to stay at home as much as possible and avoid meeting up with others. Being away from extended family, friends and colleagues, has shown us how important it is to have good relationships in all spheres of life. To develop robust connections with others, we should develop social skills such as gratitude, kindness, honest communication, forgiveness and acceptance. This allows us to have meaningful connections and feel a sense of belonging to the world.



Our physical well-being is firmly connected to our mental and emotional well-being, which is greatly affected by our social and personal well-being. Our personal well-being also influences how we interact with the external world which also affects our social well-being. Everything is connected. In the next blog we will be looking at personal well-being which explores how we see the world and others, how we look at ourselves and how we look after ourselves.