Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements

Title: *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*

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Book Description:

Much of what we *think* will improve our wellbeing is either misguided or just plain wrong. Contrary to what many people believe, wellbeing isn't just about being happy. Nor is it only about being wealthy or successful. And it's certainly not limited to physical health and wellness. In fact, focusing on any of these elements in isolation may drive us to frustration and even a sense of failure.

When striving to improve our lives, we are quick to buy into programs that promise to help us make money, lose weight, or strengthen our relationships. While it might be easier to treat these critical areas in our lives as if they operate independently, they don't. Gallup's comprehensive study of people in more than 150 countries revealed five universal, interconnected elements that shape our lives:

The Five Essential Elements: Career Wellbeing; Social Wellbeing; Financial Wellbeing; Physical Wellbeing; and Community Wellbeing.

Book Quotes:

Wellbeing is about the combination of our love for what we do each day, the quality of our relationships, the security of our finances, the vibrancy of our physical health, and the pride we take in what we have contributed to our communities. Most importantly, it's about how these five elements interact. Location 56

The Five Essential Elements These elements are the currency of a life that matters. They do not include every nuance of what's important in life, but they do represent five broad categories that are essential to most people. The first element is about how you occupy your time or simply liking what you do every day: your Career Wellbeing. The second element is about having strong relationships and love in your life: your Social Wellbeing. The third element is about effectively managing your economic life: your Financial Wellbeing. The fourth element is about having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis: your Physical Wellbeing. The fifth element is about the sense of engagement you have with the area where you live: your Community Wellbeing. Location 75

However, the single biggest threat to our own wellbeing tends to be ourselves. Without even giving it much thought, we allow our short-term decisions to override what's best for our long-term wellbeing. Location 93

For decades, psychologists have described increases in the ability to delay gratification as a cornerstone of human development from childhood to adulthood. Location 104

Our wellbeing actually recovers more rapidly from the death of a spouse than it does from a sustained period of unemployment. Location 148

When you reflect on the most memorable events, experiences, and moments in your life, you'll notice that they have something in common: the presence of another person. The best moments — and most agonizing ones — occur at the intersection between two people. Yet we often underestimate the impact of our closest relationships and social connections. Location 274

In other words, having direct and frequent social contact with someone who has high wellbeing dramatically boosts your chances of being happy.

The data suggest that to have a thriving day, we need six hours of social time. When we get at least six hours of daily social time, it increases our wellbeing and minimizes stress and worry. Just so you don't think that six hours of social time is unattainable in one day, it's important to note that the six hours includes time at work, at home, on the telephone, talking to friends, sending e-mail, and other communication. Location 339

A study of more than 15,000 people over the age of 50 found that among those who were socially active, their memories declined at less than half the rate compared to those who were the least social. Location 350

When a team of Harvard researchers surveyed people about their spending on themselves, their spending on others, and their happiness, they found that spending on oneself does not boost wellbeing. However, spending money on others does — and it appears to be as important to people's happiness as the total amount of money they make. Location 425

While spending on ourselves isn't likely to help much, this research suggests that the worst time to make a major purchase is when you are feeling down. We spend the most when we feel the worst. Location 443

If your daily work is fulfilling and your relationships are strong, you are substantially less likely to get caught up in this comparison dilemma. And you won't be as tempted to keep up with the proverbial Joneses. Location 487

People with high Financial Wellbeing spend their money wisely. They buy experiences that provide them with lasting memories. They give to others and don't just spend on themselves. As a result of managing their money wisely, they have the financial freedom to spend even more time with the people whose company they enjoy most. Location 556

Given the influence that our genes have, it's easy to feel as if a lot of our health is beyond our control. After all, we can't just change our genes or re-sequence our DNA. Location 591

However, new research is revealing that we might be able to control the expression of our genes. So even if you have a gene that predisposes you to a chronic disease, there are things you can do to either silence or amplify the expression of that gene. Location 592

It might seem counterintuitive, but one of the best ways to combat fatigue is by exercising. We might use being too tired as an excuse to avoid working out, but that's the worst time to skip exercise. A comprehensive analysis of more than 70 trials found that exercising is much more effective at eliminating fatigue than prescription drugs used for this purpose. Location 649

Getting a good night's sleep is like hitting a reset button. It clears our stressors from the day before. Even if we have a bad day, getting a sound night of sleep gives us a fresh start on the next day. It also increases our chances of having energy and high wellbeing throughout the day. Location 672

Each night of sleep allows our brain to process what we learned the day before. As a result, we are more likely to remember what we learned if we get a sound night's sleep. Location 680

Sleep helps us synthesize the learning and experiences of a day. While we sleep, our brain is playing connect-the-dots until we wake up. And it likely does so more effectively than we could if we tried when we were awake. So while we have known all along that a good night's sleep helps the next day, it is just as important for encoding information we learned the day before. Location 689

When we asked people with thriving wellbeing about the greatest contribution they had made in their life, with few exceptions, they mentioned the impact they have had on another person, group, or community. Location 789

Several studies have shown a link between altruistic behavior and increases in overall longevity, and researchers have speculated that this might be due in part to how well-doing inoculates us against stress and negative emotions. Location 803

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "Location" is provided after each entry