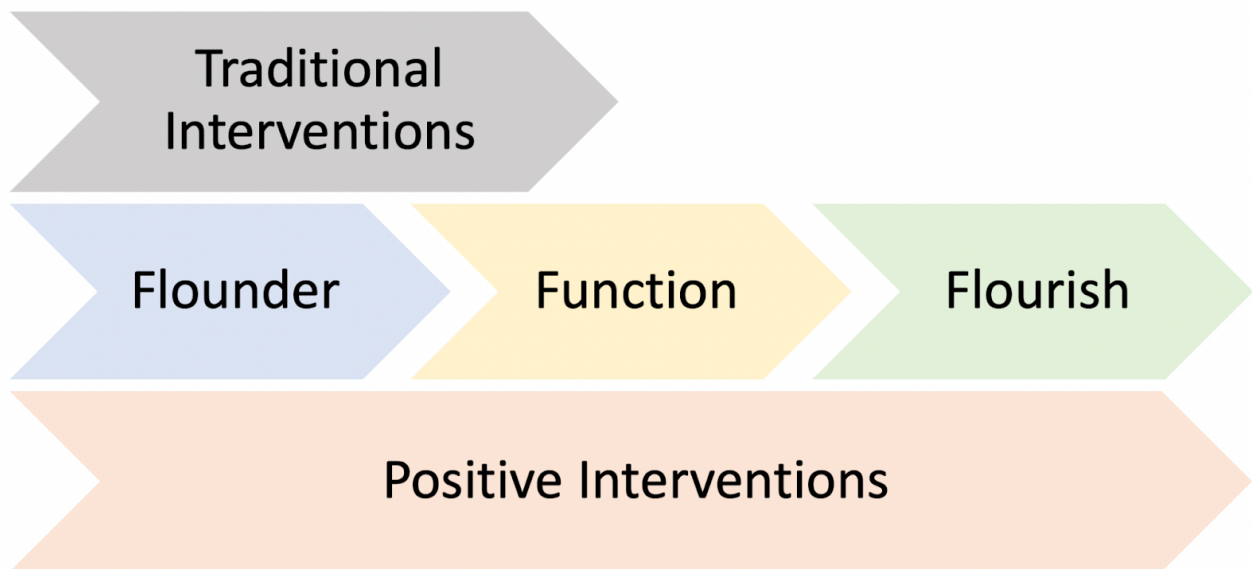


Wellbeing and Its Importance in Schools

In order to improve the mental, emotional, and social wellbeing of children and adults, understanding what makes us happy and successful has become an important focus of recent psychological research. Wellbeing science has emerged in the past few decades, providing us with empirical evidence about the conditions needed to flourish and thrive in the face of adversity (Seligman, 2011). Wellbeing has been defined as “the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively”(Huppert & So, 2011, p. 838). Martin Seligman, the father of modern positive psychology, found that those who flourish have lives rich with Positive Emotion, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, or PERMA (Seligman, 2011). The PERMA model has been updated to PERMAH, including a section on Health/Vitality (Kern, 2022). Many interventions have been developed to improve wellbeing in each of these categories and will be expounded upon hereafter in this resource. However, while traditional psychotherapy interventions focus primarily on relieving suffering, positive psychology interventions take it one step further. The field of positive psychology seeks not only to help those who flounder to function better, but also to help those who flounder and function to flourish and thrive.



Benefits for Students

With anxiety and depression levels on the rise in our schools among both students and staff, it is important to incorporate the principles of positive psychology in our classrooms to provide our schools with opportunities to improve their psychological and social wellbeing (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[CDC], n.d.). While some may argue that wellbeing interventions take away from valuable teaching time, the implementation of school wellbeing programs actually improve standardized test scores and academic performance (Adler, 2016). Additional studies have found that higher wellbeing is linked to higher attendance rates, higher grades, and better self control (Suldo, Thalji & Ferron, 2011; Howell, 2009).

Benefits for Teachers

Wellbeing interventions are equally important for teachers and other staff members. Teaching has developed globally as one of the most high stress professions, with high levels of burnout and teacher attrition (Learning Policy Institute, 2017; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Some studies have found that as many as 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Ingersoll, Merrill & Stuckey, 2014). Poor work-life balance, emotional exhaustion, little administrative support, and lack of autonomy, among other factors, contribute to lower wellbeing and enjoyment at work (Falecki & Mann, 2021; Seldon, 2018). Additionally, teacher wellbeing is directly linked to student wellbeing (Roffrey, 2012; Klusmann et al., 2016; McCallum & Price, 2010). If our teachers are unhappy, this will have a trickle-down effect to our students (Roffrey, 2012). Luckily, many studies of positive psychology-based interventions have been shown to improve teacher wellbeing, thereby improving teacher job satisfaction, stress levels and effectiveness (Falecki & Mann, 2021; Cameron, 2012; Dutton, 2003; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001).

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