The PERMA Model in Schools: Classroom Conversations that Build Resilience

NYSAIS Brain Conference
March 6, 2020
“Take Five”

Inhale, trace up

Exhale, trace down
Session Overview

Part 1: *Introduction & Conceptual Framework*
- The PERMA-H Model of Wellbeing
- Thriving, Not Just Surviving

- Break -

Part 2: *Integrating Wellbeing Activities in Our Work*
- Positive Neuroplasticity & the Power of Habit
- Discussion & Brainstorming for Use Cases
- Follow-through & Integration with WOOP
Warm-Up

- Something that made you laugh recently.
- A lesson, topic, or professional activity you’re looking forward to digging into in the 2nd half of the year.
- Someone who’s supported you in school in some way this year.
- Something you’ve done at school recently in service of someone else.
- A part of your job you worked hard at and are proud of this year.
- Something you’ve done lately to recharge your battery.
Key Principles of Wellbeing
Not Just Surviving, but Thriving

“I believe psychology has done very well in working out how to understand and treat disease. But I think that is literally half-baked. If all you do is work to fix problems, to alleviate suffering, then by definition you are working to get people to zero, to neutral.”

~ Martin Seligman, PhD (2011)
Not Just Surviving, but Thriving

Protective Factors

Significant mental health challenges
Getting by
Doing fine
Thriving

-8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
The 5 Keys to Thriving not Surviving

1. Experiencing **positive emotions**.

2. Feeling **engaged and excited** by what we do.

3. Having **fulfilling relationships** and feeling seen for who we are.

4. Sensing that our lives have **meaning and purpose** to them.

5. Feeling **capable & accomplished** at what we do.
The 5 Keys to Thriving not Surviving

P - positive emotions
E - engagement
R - relationships
M - meaning and purpose
A - accomplishment

The PERMA Model
(Seligman, 2011)
The 5 Keys to Thriving not Surviving

P - positive emotions
E - engagement
R - relationships
M - meaning and purpose
A - accomplishment
H - health

The PERMA-H Model
(Norrish et al, 2013)
P- Positive Emotions

- Savoring
- Joy
- Humor
- Gratitude

“When you appreciate the good, the good appreciates…” ~ Tal Ben Shahar
E - Engagement

- Sense of “flow”
- Immersive, energetic focus & effort
- The opposite of apathy & boredom

“Few things are sadder than encountering a person who knows exactly what he should do, yet cannot muster enough energy to do it.” — Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
R - Relationships

- Sense of belonging with others
- Sense of support and exchange

“To feel the love of people whom we love is a fire that feeds our life.” ~ Pablo Neruda
M - Meaning

- Sense of something that matters both to us and beyond us
- Sense of goal-driven purpose

“A bird doesn’t sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.” ~ Maya Angelou
A - Accomplishment

- Experiencing success
- Building a sense of mastery and autonomy

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself, any direction you choose.” ~ Dr. Seuss
H - Health

- Resilience and ability to deal with setbacks
- Non-judgmental awareness of the present moment (mindfulness)

“You are the sky. Everything else is just the weather.” ~ Pema Chödrön
Putting It Into Practice

Classroom Conversations
P - Positive Emotions

Reinforce Savoring, Joy, Humor, Gratitude

● What’s going well right now?
● What’s something that made you laugh/smile today?
● What’s something you’re grateful for today?
E - Engagement

Reinforce Curiosity, Passion, Flow, Motivation

- What’s the most interesting thing you learned this week?
- What’s something that you’re working on right now that’s really exciting?
- What’s the last thing you read/talked about that wasn’t an assignment?
R - Relationships

Reinforce Connection, Community, Kindness, Forgiveness

- Who is someone that you really admire?
- Who is someone that you really trust/lean on when things are challenging?
- Describe a time when you felt like a valued/included member of a team/family/community.
- What’s something kind/generous that you did unprompted for someone else this week/month?
Reinforce aspiration, service, values, generosity, spirituality

- What’s a cause or issue that you really care about?
- Describe a time when you felt part of something bigger/more important than yourself?
- What’s an important aspiration you have for yourself?
- What’s something you believe in?
A - Accomplishment

Reinforce growth mindset, goals, persistence; celebrate success

- What’s something you did this week/semester/year that you worked really hard on and are really proud of?
- Talk about a time when you had to try more than once to achieve a goal/complete a task.
- What’s a goal you haven’t achieved yet but you’re still working towards?
Reinforce resilience, mindful awareness

- Describe a time when you faced a really difficult challenge and thought things weren’t going to turn out ok, but in the end they did.
- Talk about a time when you bounced back from a setback/hurdle/obstacle.
- How do you know when your battery is really run down and needs recharging? What do you do to recharge?
Implementation Considerations
Repetition Matters

- *Positive neuroplasticity*: neurons that fire together, wire together
- *Success over scale*: small successes repeated over time are more impactful than large gestures that don’t stick or land
- *Rituals & routine* breed familiarity
Keep the Body in Mind

- **Safety First**: undercut the “fight or flight” response through laughter, movement, or connection

- **Buy In**: it’s more important that it’s an *authentic* felt experience; choose the highest risk activity that everybody can do (engage all rather than some)
Integration
How might you use PERMA?

What is one concept or question you could incorporate…

1. **personally**, in your daily life?
2. **as a faculty**, in how you work with colleagues?
3. **as a teacher**, in how you work with students?
Alan Brown
alan@learningtothrive.nyc
Closing Session
Shifting Habits with WOOP

- Wish
- Outcome
- Obstacle
- Plan
Appreciation & Integration

- I’m appreciative of...
- I’m curious about...
- I’m grateful for...
- I’m excited to...