

The background is a photograph of three surfers underwater. One surfer is in the foreground, upside down, holding a surfboard. Two other surfers are visible in the background, also holding surfboards. The water is clear blue, and sunlight rays are visible. Overlaid on the left side are several hexagonal geometric shapes, some solid green and others outlined in white.

RENS TER WEIJDE

Building Positive Organisations

**A PRAGMATIC GUIDE TO HELP PEOPLE
AND ORGANISATIONS FLOURISH**

'Rens has systematically and effectively implemented the best of positive psychology in a number of settings, from elite sports to corporate teams. My hope is that many more individuals, teams and organisations will benefit from his important work in the near future.'

Tal Ben-Shahar, lecturer and author on the topic of happiness, former teacher of the happiness course at Harvard University

'A workshop like this should be in any university curriculum, especially in a demanding environment like Oxford.'

Matthijs Vakar, president of the Clarendon Scholars' Council, University of Oxford

'Rens's reputation preceded him. Before our first encounter I'd heard positive things about him, his work and his company. At our first meeting, I was a little surprised to be greeted by a smiling, fresh faced, athletic man bubbling with enthusiasm at the prospect of working with my team. From the first moment, Rens hit the right chord with me. The mixture of science-based knowledge and "feeling the moment" fitted my vision perfectly. Rens joined the team at the start of a recycle phase. As expected, the first half of the season was a tough period. Results were not what we wanted. With pressure high and confidence low, the team played amazingly in the second half of the season. Finally, we finished second overall. A great achievement for a new team coming from such a low league position. Rens played a key role in the success and growth of the team in the 2013–2014 season. For his effort and work I have the greatest respect and feel honoured to have worked with him.'

Russell Garcia, head coach of HC Bloemendaal field hockey club

'Rens is the most sought-after expert in his field among my clients. His innovative methods are grounded in the latest scientific research and are consequently tailored to the specific needs of individuals in order to help them achieve their aspirations. This, combined with his relentless energy, genuine empathy and engaging positivity, helps bring people into continuous action unlike any other coach I have seen.'

Kayvan Kian, McKinsey & Company

'Rens has made the team more conscious of their strengths and the power of their (sometimes unconscious) beliefs. He has introduced practical ways to change our performance in a positive way.'

Alex Pastoor, former coach of SBV Excelsior football club

'In 2013, I led a team of six to cross the Atlantic Ocean by kiteboard. When facing one of the heaviest setbacks in our preparations, Rens came to support us. Just like a compass can help a sailor maintain his course through a storm, teambuilding exercises can help a team maintain its course during setbacks. Within two days Rens had set the stage for our team spirit to sort itself out — and regain the confidence needed to cross the ocean.'

Filippo van Hellenberg Hubar, founder of Enable Passion and the HTC Kite Challenge

'We had the pleasure of having Rens as one of our keynote speakers at our PwC leadership masterclass. During his speech he let the audience work on themselves with some very tough personal questions, something that is not easy to do, especially in the big groups we had for our masterclass. Yet, with a pragmatic approach, he succeeded in planting some seeds within the participants for them to continue to work on their journey to happiness. Rens proved to be a very suitable speaker for our leadership masterclass and was right at home on our "one happy island" of Aruba.'

Ruben Goedhoop, director of PwC Aruba

'Rens helps you see what is important to see, but what you might not want to see. He's fairly straightforward about what he thinks and sees, and he truly enjoys helping in that way. He has a unique view of the world and what can be done to make it a better place, which is very inspiring.'

Annelie Pompe, professional freediver and world record holder in variable weight freediving

'Every session with Rens provides me with new insights. There is a great dynamic between Rens and the team, which makes the players open and ready to discuss important matters freely. Especially the awareness of specific mental aspects is relevant for the team, and for me as their coach.'

Marinus Dijkhuizen, head coach of SBV Excelsior, football team

The background of the page is decorated with a pattern of isometric cubes. These cubes are arranged in various clusters and lines, primarily along the top and right edges, with some smaller groups scattered in the middle-left area. The cubes are rendered in a light gray color with thin black outlines, creating a three-dimensional effect.

BUILDING POSITIVE ORGANISATIONS

‘Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being.’

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE



RENS TER WEIJDE

Building Positive Organisations

**A PRAGMATIC GUIDE TO HELP PEOPLE
AND ORGANISATIONS FLOURISH**

Warden Press

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ISBN

Hardback: 978-94-92004-26-0

Paperback: 978-94-92004-23-9

E-book (Epub): 978-94-92004-24-6

E-book (Kindle): 978-94-92004-25-3

Editor: Jim Dempsey, Amsterdam

Cover design: Griet Van Haute, Gent

Cover image: Brian Biemann, Haleiwa (HI)

Interior design and lay-out: Sander Pinkse, Amsterdam

Photo author: xllens photography / Rubianca Simmelsgaard,
Hoofddorp

This edition published by Warden Press, Amsterdam

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WITH THANKS TO...

With great thanks to my friends, colleagues and others who continue to inspire me and support me on my path:

- + Marja Dekker, for simply being the greatest mother on the planet
- + Paul ter Weijde, for being a great father and sparring partner
- + Wieke ter Weijde, for being a great sister and all the 100% honest feedback
- + Ilona van der Boon, for the long-term, unconditional support and love
- + Louis Dell, for a great friendship and many years of support
- + Jaap Duin, for the eternal inspiration, radical moment and friendship
- + Jeroen Drijver, for being a real 'partner in crime' and a great friend
- + Spencer Heijnen, for always combining brightness with a real loving attitude
- + Kayvan Kian, for being a great friend and sparring partner
- + Arne Gast, for having trust in me and helping me in the process
- + Jelmer Verhoog, for being eternally patient and helpful
- + Danny Sterman, for always sharing knowledge and being a real friend
- + Lee Mason, for being a strong partner and friend with a similar mission
- + Martine Kveim, for providing unlimited kindness to all the people around her and supporting me in my work

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As a psychologist, Rens specialises in the application of good-to-great psychological techniques to build the performance and well-being of his clients. His clients include many renowned companies, as well as some of the world's best athletes. Rens recently founded Purpose+, a company that aims to create a more meaningful business paradigm.

As well as being a psychologist, Rens is also a part-time athlete. He trains daily to realise his personal goals in life, which include climbing the famous seven summits and surfing the best surf spots on the planet. In his free time, he loves to meditate, surf, scuba dive, hang out with friends and study physics. He currently lives in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

FOREWORD

As a licensed clinical psychologist and researcher at the University of Toronto Scarborough, my expertise includes positive clinical psychology, strength-based resilience, post-traumatic growth and positive education. Although I am a clinical psychologist, I try to push the envelope of clinical psychology — expanding it to explore traditionally non-clinical niches. I try hard to genuinely and deeply explore the best in people and then work with clients to creatively use their intact resources to change their less than desirable emotions and experiences. I do this within the framework of positive psychotherapy (PPT), an innovative positive psychology-based therapeutic approach that I devised with Dr Seligman during my post-doctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania. I am quite passionate about advancing the scientific practice of positive clinical psychology. My passion takes me to interesting places where I meet interesting people. One of the interesting people I have met is Rens ter Weijde, a sport and performance psychologist turned management consultant, who's now on his way to put into action the science of happiness in organisational milieu. Rens, in my view, truly brings high energy to the table, and I can see how he works with clients to realise the impact. In fact, I couldn't help but leave a present for him after we met in Amsterdam for a workshop (I gave him the book *Superbodies* by Greg Wells). I believe this energy is needed now, since we have seen quite some research on happiness, but still few practical applications. This is especially true for corporate organisations, where the economic crisis has made long hours and stress inevitable for many, but where few people have a clear sense of purpose, creatively integrated with pleasure and engagement in their working lives. The absence of these elements creates, at best, a lack of motivation

and, at worst, recurring stress. Positive psychology, with its empirical foundations, can offer a lot to make work-life pleasant, engaging and meaningful, and Rens's book is an admirable effort in this regard.

Tayyab Rashid, licensed clinical psychologist, researcher at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and writer of the Positive Psychotherapy Manual



PROLOGUE

THE BIRTH OF PURPOSE+

As a psychologist I've been lucky. Where many of my friends had a hard time finding a good job after their study of the human mind, I had the chance to work with some of the most inspiring people on the planet right from the start of my career. Where most psychologists around me chose to focus on the safety of a job in a larger company, I did the opposite: I started a company in a domain I cared a lot about: sport psychology. Sport psychology essentially deals with the possibilities of the human mind, and is focused on improving the health and performance of those using it, either for individuals, or for teams.

Looking back, my choice proved to be the right one. Although it was hard — sport psychologists do not make a lot of money, and there is little room to build a company in a market that only has a limited number of athletes to begin with — it has been worth the effort. Whether it's been the athletes I've met that aspire to do the impossible, or the radical company executives that want to change their organisations for the better, I've always had the opportunity to do great things with them and explore what's possible when people start seeing the world in a different light. Working with these people has been a thrill and an honour, and in the process, it has taught me a lot about myself. In this first part of the book, I'd like to tell you how I became the person I am today.

I grew up in a small town in the Netherlands, called Haarlem, just west of the famous Dutch capital, Amsterdam. Haarlem was a good place to grow up, and I spent most of my childhood outside. Our house was between the city centre and the beach, and I lived there with my mother (Marja), sister (Wieke) and father (Paul) until I was 16. My

time as a child was well spent, I remember taking long walks through the forest, spending time on the beach with friends and enjoying many games outside.

Although Haarlem proved to be a great place to live, I struggled to get through my teenage years. I had a hard time accepting who I was, and no longer connected well with friends on many of the things I had been interested in. Looking back, I feel this disconnect was due to me being very different than most other teenage boys: I mainly read Buddhist scriptures and meditated while my friends spent most of their time on social activities (usually combining soccer with beer).

I felt misunderstood and lonely at times, and I responded by studying martial arts intensely. I had done judo as a child for fun, but later I started training in multiple martial arts, including Ninjutsu, Aikido, Taekwondo, and visited every seminar I could find. I vividly remember training the same sword cut for hours in my mother's backyard, bare-foot and in the snow, believing it would 'strengthen' me mentally and physically and therefore make me a better person. I spent countless hours practising punches, kicks and other fighting moves on a punch bag in the small attic room of our house.

To show my commitment to the practice, I got into the habit of waking at 7 am every day and starting with a 'mental resilience' exercise (in a push-up position with my wrists on the floor for 7 minutes — I invite you to try it) followed by a 30 minute meditation and then a cold shower. I travelled to India to find and practise the origin of all martial arts, which can partly be found in the ancient art of Kalaripayattu. Luckily for me, they still practised this in the southern regions of India, and I was able to train there for a few weeks. All in all, it was a difficult period for me, and I was lucky to find strength in martial arts at the time. I believe it has made me a better person and taught me what you can achieve if you work really hard for it.

At 19, I decided to study psychology at university in Amsterdam. Like many of my friends, I moved to Amsterdam. Amsterdam turned out

to be a melting pot of different cultures, with a strong intellectual and 'free' vibe that I still appreciate to this day. I enrolled in a degree programme that was hugely popular at the time, with hundreds of people listening to lectures in large conference halls. However, I felt that my motivation was different from most people: I didn't really care about Western psychology and science, my prime focus was on becoming a better martial artist through insights into the human mind.

Not surprisingly, I didn't find the course rewarding and found most of the lectures to be lacking any real value. I also discovered that I wasn't the kind of person who could sit still for hours while listening to a story told at the teller's pace; I needed more speed to keep me engaged. I therefore soon stopped going to the lectures, and decided to only read the books and show up for the exams. Although I was disengaged for most of my university years, I did manage to finish within the recommended time. More importantly, I never lost my interest in the human mind, so I kept reading more interesting (i.e. Buddhist) books on the side.

During my studies something important happened: I lost interest in martial arts. The practice that had given me strength for many years had begun to backfire; I felt it no longer served its purpose of making me a better person. The key moment came when my little sister, Wieke (who is 2.5 years younger than me), told me honestly that she felt it no longer made me a better person, instead it made me seem aggressive and overly protective at times, like a war veteran that is continually on the lookout for trouble.

Her feedback resonated with me and touched me, and I realised the practice had lost its meaning for me. I believe my sister's message hit me so strongly because I had already felt it in my heart: when walking the streets of Amsterdam, I became aware that I was continuously checking everybody's distance to me. Distance and time are key components in any martial arts practice (e.g. you have to bridge the distance to perform a successful attack with a sword).

I had also become increasingly uncomfortable with most of my martial arts teachers, since I felt they didn't always show the 'selfless mastery' that I was looking for (although I have fond memories of a few great teachers: Simon Deering, Marco Barends and Jan Boy Bosma). But, finally, my sister's comments gave me the final push to quit martial arts, and I changed my habits almost instantly.

After finishing my four years at university, I was still not in love with the field of Western psychology and had serious doubts about pursuing a career as a psychologist. I had always worked as a physical trainer and martial arts instructor while studying, and felt that I would be happier in a physical line of work of that nature.

Luckily, this all changed when I encountered a sport psychology minor at the University of Amsterdam. It was another six months of studying, but doing it changed my perspective. I loved the content, although the field was still in its infancy in many ways, and decided that it was *the* way to bring my knowledge of martial arts, physical training and psychology together to satisfy my intellectual needs and find a job in the future.

Although the sport psychology course didn't have much content at the time, it affected me a lot. I realised that I was much like the athletes we spoke about in the class: with a similar drive and persistence to reach the goals I value in life. I finished the 6-month course, worked with the founder of the course to design the Master's degree that was available soon after, and then founded my first company in the field (called Peak).

I made a conscious choice to become the best sport psychologist in the Netherlands. It has led me to work with professional base jumpers, soccer teams, circus artists, sailors, freedivers, hockey players, martial artists, singers and national teams. Through this, I have truly experienced the possibilities of training the human mind. My work has led me to spend time with people able to freedive to 126 metres on a single breath, people with asthma climbing the highest mountains on the

planet, base jumpers flying unprotected through the air at speeds of up to 250 km/h, and kite surfers crossing an entire ocean with their kites. It has truly showed me what is possible when people choose to set their mind to something.

Three years after I graduated in sport psychology — and plenty of beautiful experiences later — I got in touch with McKinsey & Company to discuss a talent profile they needed for their employees. A friend of mine, a recruiter at a small firm, had recommended me to the director of staff at the Amsterdam office for the job, and we organised a time to meet and have a chat. If I'm honest, I hadn't researched the firm before I arrived that day and couldn't care less about what they were doing. At the time, I firmly believed that being a sport psychologist was about as good a job as you could possibly have and large organisations were dull, boring places that would never change the world for the better. I had even regularly tried to convince my girlfriend at the time (Ilona, who was a consultant at the multinational IT company, Atos) to leave the 'grey world' because it seemed to be such a waste of the valuable time we have on this planet. Little did I know that the meeting with McKinsey & Company would change my perspective completely.

I remember cycling back from the meeting and receiving a call on my mobile. The lady I spoke to was very direct, saying they would not consider me for a role in designing the talent profiles right away (it was a full-time job and I had offered to do it in a few days, which seemed ridiculous to her, and it probably was). Instead, she asked if I was interested in having more talks to become a full-time Organization Practice consultant at the company. I felt somewhat honoured, but didn't know how to respond. I thanked her and went home to discuss the offer with my girlfriend. My recollection of that conversation is that she said something like, 'I know you think you've figured it all out, but I think you should give this a shot to see where it brings you'. And so I did. Just months later, I stopped working as a sport psychologist and joined McKinsey's Organization Practice, learning everything there is to know about organisations, the value of underlying mind-sets and beliefs in large organisations, and effective leadership in uncertain times.

The firm suited me much better than I had expected. I had been a lone wolf until then, but at McKinsey I learned that there were people out there with ideas very much like my own. I understood what they were saying in their discussions and soon connected well with many people at the office. I still have many friends there, and am happy to be one of the ‘Advisors to McKinsey’, helping the firm with specific cases related to good-to-great psychology for teams and organisations.

As time went by, I felt that my work with athletes had spoiled me a little as a psychologist. I found many of the projects with businesses quite boring — they had little impact or weren’t human enough in my view — and I longed to go back to a world where the effect of my work on people was more visible. But I also learned a lot, and decided to hang around for a bit.

Until joining McKinsey, I had believed I was a good coach, capable of helping people with whatever problems they had. After a few months in management consulting, I began to doubt my qualities more and more. I realised that I had coached people primarily on *how to achieve their goals*, (‘There’s the summit, here’s how you can get to it’), but in companies I often had to deal with *why* questions (engagement issues, for example, or people who were not willing to change behaviour, or where management didn’t clearly see the company’s purpose). I realised that, in many organisations, people don’t have the clear direction in life my former group of clients had. I saw that, for many people working in organisations, the meaning of what they were doing was not clear, and it was often hard to see how the organisation was really contributing to something positive on a larger scale.

I needed to learn fast to become successful in my new position, and change the way I worked so that I could become useful to a new group of clients. With a lot of support from some great people in the firm (notably Arne Gast, Michiel Kruyt and Kayvan Kian), I found the knowledge I was looking for from a field known as positive psychology. I see it essentially as sport psychology for non-athletes. The essence? Helping people lead the most fulfilling life possible, which

also leads to better performance over time. Or, in more popular language: helping people move from good to great. I fell in love with the scientific rigour behind many of the concepts in positive psychology and, within months, I met some of the greatest thinkers in the field, and was able to give workshops with them and explore the subject in depth.

Although I was grateful for many of the things I learned with McKinsey & Company — and even more so for the friends I made — I still felt that I wasn't delivering the impact I wanted. My clients — athletes and corporate managers — were all at the top of their field, and I had not yet found a way to move beyond this group. I believe that most psychologists are driven by the notion of helping people and that it doesn't really matter if the people you're helping are famous and/or successful already. For that reason, I felt I needed to leave the firm and start something that would have a real impact on a large scale. The formula I had in mind was: $\text{McKinsey} + \text{Happiness} = \text{Consultancy 2.0}$. I felt that my new firm had to combine positive psychology with strategy in order to build the 'positive sum game' organisations of the future. At the same time, I believed my organisation had to be open source, to make it accessible to as many people as possible.

I started my research with what entrepreneurs would call the 'sensing' phase: gathering information about the market, the people in it, and the needs that exist in different customer segments. I quickly found that the amount of people 'flourishing' in Europe was considered to be a mere 17% by a recent estimate,¹ and I discovered that there are many sound methods to get an insight into the well-being of individuals (from classic surveys to real-time measurements with apps). I also learned that happiness is the popular word for what scientists call well-being.

However, what I didn't find was a market for the work. There was no one translating positive psychology to organisations, or teaching positive psychology to executives, or doing anything with it at all on a substantial scale. I realised this could mean only two things: either the

market didn't exist, or it's a blue ocean (a place with good fish, but no fishermen).

I decided to take the leap, convincing myself that 'starting a purpose-driven business is a good thing, even if it fails in the end'. I quit my consultancy job as I had stopped martial arts, abruptly. Directly afterwards, I kick-started the world's first ever 'happiness consultancy', called The Energy Strategy back then, and now called Purpose+. The organisation would be the first to translate the positive sciences to organisations on a large scale, and would focus on doing workshops for the first few years in order to create a 'critical mass'. My end goal, as I told my friends, was that organisations of the future would include purpose in their annual report, and would start measuring it as rigorously as their financial indicators. The name, therefore, implied that purpose (loosely defined as having a positive impact on something bigger than yourself) should come first, and monetary rewards are not the be-all and end-all of business. Below is an illustration of how I envisioned the company, and how I still explain it to people.

The start was rough. Many people told me the ideas were 'fluffy' and probably unrelated to hard business outcomes. Some corporate leaders said that happiness was the wrong track to follow, and that they

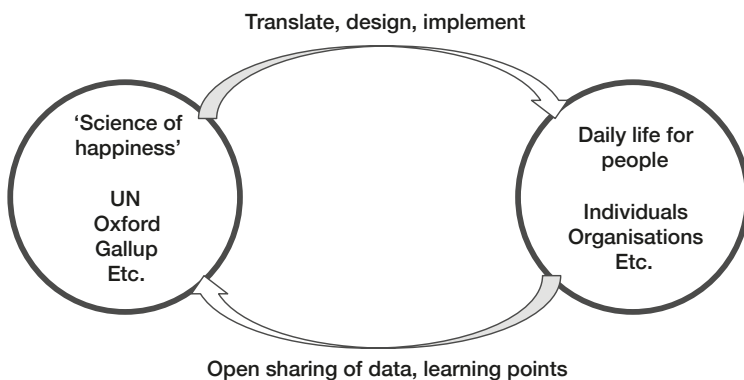


Figure 1 The essence of what we do: translating the science of happiness in a pragmatic way to the daily lives of people, in collaboration with scientists on the topic

considered happiness to be a personal affair. Others believed it would be better for employees to be slightly unhappy since that would make them work harder. And others told me they were already ‘doing something like this’, and then mentioned the current surveys on employee engagement. The positive science of leading a happy, meaningful life, it seemed for a while, was only valuable to a small group of university professors and maybe bookstores with their shelves of self-help books.

As the content of my new company received some serious scrutiny, the original strategy I chose faced criticism as well. I called it ‘give before you get’. In short, this strategy entailed giving away all the material in open workshops to which anybody could sign up. We even created an open cloud environment containing all the relevant literature and

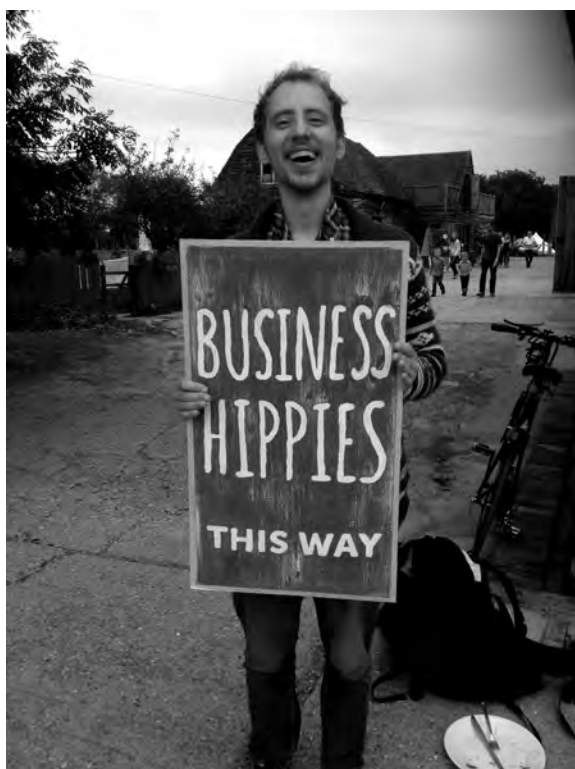


Figure 2 Spencer Heijnen, one of our P+ consultants in the Amsterdam office with a sign that shows how we were perceived in the beginning

EXPERIENCE

First talks with company executives on happiness

When I left my job as a consultant and started focusing purely on happiness, my choice raised quite a few eyebrows. I was asked questions like, 'Why throw away a career in one of the most prestigious firms on the planet?' Others were more comforting, noting that, 'It cannot really go wrong when you are trying to do something useful, it's worth the experiment.' I remember many of the conversations I had with clients, where I tried to explain what I was trying to create.

One of the first of these conversations was with the head of 'people development' at a large microchip manufacturing company in the Netherlands. During the conversation, he insisted on knowing the 'bottom line' impact of the work in financial terms, and noted that he already measured 'engagement'. In the end, I explained that I couldn't predict the bottom line results exactly, but that I believed the happiness of his employees was reason enough to try. He told me he couldn't sell that to the CEO, who was keen on numbers. I told him that I understood his point of view, but that we were really in the well-being business. If he was looking for more efficiency, or a leaner and meaner business, there were other firms out there. We laughed, and I walked out the door agreeing we would be in touch in the future, and I gave him an experiment to try: do one random act of kindness (RAK) every day for the next week, and let me know what it meant to him. I received word a week later that it had been awesome, and quite impactful for him personally. Later I learned he left the company to do something closer to his heart.

Another conversation that I vividly remember was at one of the largest insurance firms in the Netherlands. I went to the company wearing a T-shirt and green trousers (my favourite trousers at the time). When we entered the elevator, the company's executive stared at me for a while, before noting that, 'We need more people

who come in here like that'. We had a great conversation afterwards, noting the difference between employees of the new generation (Generation Y) that needs purpose in their work, and the older generation who fail to really address this. We are now good friends, and meet every two months to update progress in the field.

A third, highly engaging experience happened when I was asked to give a presentation to the leadership council of a large, international, bank. The leadership council consisted of the global CEO, all his country CEOs and the other relevant executives at the same level. When I entered the room, I realised I was – as usual – severely underdressed, wearing a T-shirt while the others wore expensive suits. I decided to make a joke of it, and dive into the topic right away. The executives had filled in a well-being survey beforehand, and it seemed they were much happier (20% more) than the average scores in the database. I immediately got their attention by starting my lecture with: 'Everybody, here (large screen with a PowerPoint presentation) is your data. I see two explanations for this: either you're all extremely happy, or you haven't been entirely honest with me. I would bet on the second option. What do you think?' They started laughing, and we ended up having a great discussion on what it means to be well and how to integrate this into organisations.

courses, and people could request access to it if they wanted. I remember a phone call with one of my former bosses at McKinsey & Company where he told me that what I was doing was a 'movement, not a company'. I wasn't really bothered by the criticism since the strategy worked very well for us. In the first year we trained around 2,000 people face-to-face in positive psychology, a number that I knew no company on Earth could match. Although we weren't making a lot of money (meaning: I ended up spending more money than I got in), I had faith in the power of networks. The idea, and the positivity around it, would spread, and it would not be long before we would have our first money-making projects as well.

Times have changed since then. The movement towards positive ways of doing business is backed by many great thinkers today (Umar Haque, with his book *Betterness: Economics for Humans*;² and Frederic Laloux, who wrote *Reinventing Organizations*)³ who openly state that they feel the world is ready for a 'new business paradigm' where money is no longer the only driver. It is as if a new era of enlightenment quest has begun, replacing solely profit-driven models of business with a new optimism: a belief that human beings and organisations can know and understand more about reality and, in knowing and understanding, choose more wisely in the future.

A new optimism⁴ is needed: so many solutions for our species hinge on solutions to the clash of competing classes, religions, the ambiguity of moral reasoning and, in the end, the meaning of humanity itself.⁵ This is the time where the two great branches of learning — science and the humanities — will need to be combined to come up with better models for the way we (choose to) live. Universities have also adopted this view, with the University of Pennsylvania offering a Master's degree in applied positive psychology, the University of Rotterdam in the Netherlands offering an executive programme on the value of happiness, Harvard offering a course in happiness and the University of Amsterdam a course in positive future leadership. The George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia, has even embraced the content so much that they aspire to become the world's first well-being university by integrating positive practices throughout their entire system. All these universities teach very similar ideas to their students: radical optimism, the value of well-being and the skill of looking beyond the self.

This view is also supported by Ban Ki-moon, the current Secretary-General of the United Nations, who has said that he hopes for a new, 'more human' business model for the near future, where factors other than financial capital will be measured. This has led to the annually published UN Happiness Report, a collaboration with Gallup-Healthways. I really believe that successful business models of the future will include positive impact as much as profit.

Interest in the concept of personal happiness is now at an all-time high, and companies are starting to see the value of embedding the science of happiness in the way they operate and in what they bring to their clients. I expect this will evolve from a focus on personal happiness in organisations to a focus where the essence will be the positive impact on others. I say this because, apart from reading the literature about it, I have literally seen many of my clients taking steps in this direction already.⁶

In short, the future for happiness experts in business looks bright, and I sincerely believe there can never be enough happiness experts on the planet. Happiness, in the end, is a positive sum game: it will multiply just by sharing it. The world of things is often subjected to the law of diminishing returns, but the world of ideas is not: spreading them makes us stronger over time and will help us innovate. I sincerely hope this book will help you become a happiness expert too, so you can find your own way to make the world, or your own organisation, a little better by enriching it with radical optimism and a sense of true purpose.



Figure 3 Rens explaining the science of happiness to 120 leaders on Aruba, around 18 months after the start of Purpose+

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is about positive psychology and the future of organisations. Although the central thesis — that positive psychology can contribute to a better way of doing business — is simple, the book contains sections that are highly specific to different target groups. Here are some strategies to help you read this book in the best possible way.

If you're mainly interested in personal happiness strategies

For all readers interested primarily in how to be happier in life, I recommend reading chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7. The specific techniques can be found quickly in the mind map on personal flourishing on page 17 (Figure 4). Note that the mind map shows you letters per technique (P, E, R, M, A and V), which will be explained in detail in chapter 2.1.

If you want to take your company, or idea, to the next level

If you're heading a company, or setting up a new organisation, I would recommend reading chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (especially the part on positive leadership), 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 can be especially interesting for entrepreneurs in the area of positive psychology since it contains our programme descriptions and products so far. Chapter 6 will be particularly interesting for innovators since it contains a lot of ideas on positive psychology that have not been fully developed yet, but which, in my view, represent serious opportunities. Specific techniques can be found quickly using the mind map on positive leadership on p. 18 (Figure 5).

If you're a manager interested in achieving a great team performance

When managing teams to achieve peak performance, the right culture can be of great importance. If you're reading this book with that in mind, it's best to start with chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (focus on positive management and positive team membership here), 5 and 7. Techniques can be found quickly through the mind map on positive management on page 19 (Figure 6).

If you would love to experience more happiness at work

If you work for an organisation and feel like your job experience could benefit from some positive psychology, I would recommend reading chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 (focus on positive team membership) and 7. Techniques can be found quickly through the mind map on positive team membership on page 20 (Figure 7).

If you have other reasons to read this book than the above, don't worry. For you I would simply suggest that you read all the chapters. I have written each chapter with great care, hoping it will contribute to a deeper understanding of happiness in life, so you will be able to make yourself — and those you love — happier. I hope you find it valuable.

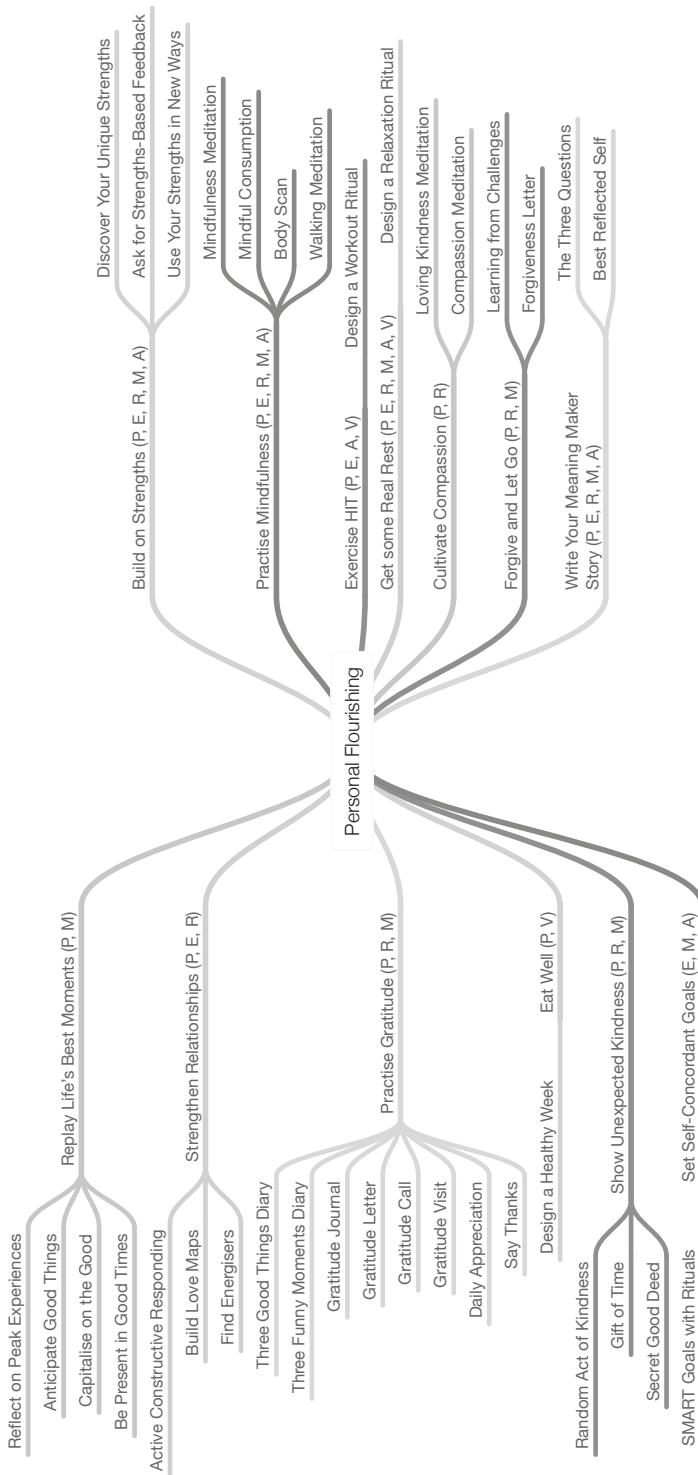


Figure 4 Personal flourishing techniques

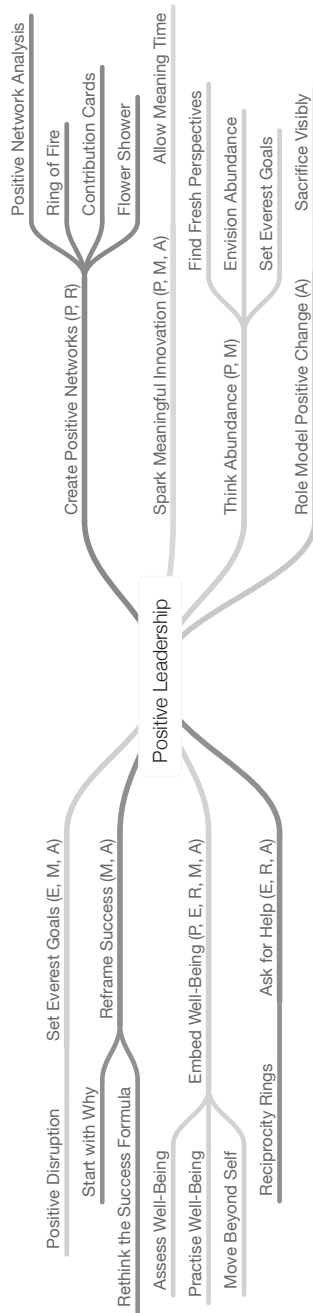


Figure 5 Positive leadership techniques



Figure 6 Positive management techniques

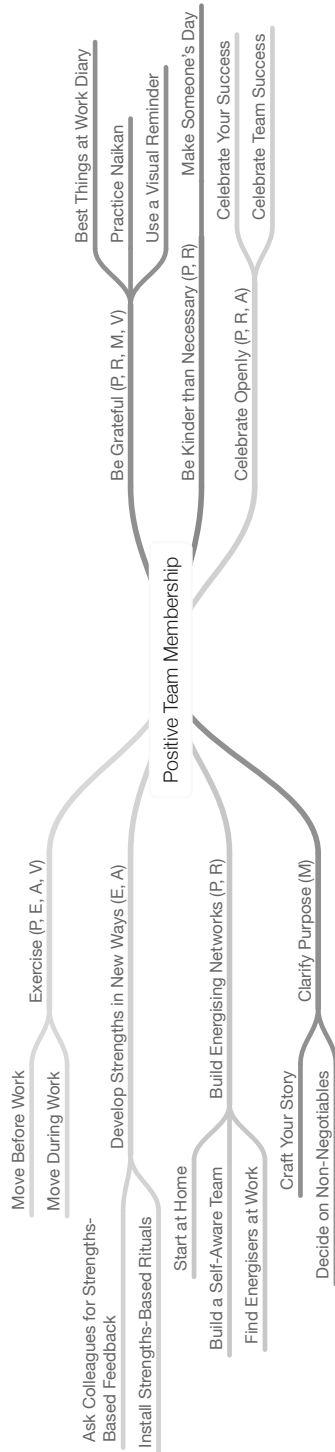


Figure 7 Positive team membership techniques

1

WHY FOCUS ON WELL-BEING?

1.1

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF WELL-BEING

The United Nations Happiness Report¹ is a sign that happiness should be high on the agenda for our planet. The UN, who also created the International Day of Happiness (with a great website to explore),² feels that in order to find a new, more sustainable business paradigm, we also need to measure new parameters. This new paradigm should encompass *meaning AND money*, not just one of the two. But why now? Why is it so important to focus on well-being in this day and age?

Let's start with a poll that featured on the UN International Day of Happiness website. The poll asked visitors: 'What do you think is more important: happiness and well-being or money and stuff? Not surprisingly, 87% chose the first answer, favouring well-being and happiness over material goods. The poll was, of course, intended to spark a discussion about what we really value in life, not to prove that happiness is more important than money for most people (since most of us already know that). We humans have a rich background when it comes to thinking about what makes life worth living, with great thinkers from many traditions whose thoughts have stood the test of time. To fully understand the situation we're in when it comes to happiness, let's consider our history for a moment.

Our story starts around 2,500 years ago, when Gautama Buddha started preaching his message in India after famously reaching enlightenment

under the Bodhi tree. His message included many things, but the fundamental idea was that human suffering is a reality and that we should face it as such. He told his followers that all people have the capacity to suffer since our lives contain many seeds of suffering (e.g. sickness, death, loss of loved ones).

Contrary to how this may seem, Buddha wasn't a pessimist — far from it. He believed the mind could be trained and, with the right training, rid itself of suffering. The way to do this was through his 8 steps, which include meditation and the right actions in life. The ultimate goal at the time: absorption in a higher level of experience of life (called nirvana, or even mahanirvana), where dualistic views of reality — good and bad, for example — no longer exist. This was the fundamental truth he believed in, and a realisation of this 'truth' would end all suffering for the practitioners of this method. The impact of this teaching was huge at the time, and still is, since it has a very strong optimistic seed that tells people that they can train to be happier. Today, there are around 350 million Buddhists on our planet.

Around the same time as the Buddha in India, Confucius was developing his work in China, which would also go on to influence many lives. Confucius was a teacher, politician and philosopher, and since ethics and morality were important to Confucius, he believed that the practice of virtues (like sincerity, cultivation of knowledge and justice) were prerequisites for a happy life. In addition, Confucius was well aware of the social nature of happiness and stressed that social bonds were essential components for a fulfilling life and a strong society. The famous quote, 'What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others,' is one of his most important lessons. Although Confucianism has relatively few official followers today (only about 6 million), his ideas have influenced many people in history and can be recognised in many sectors today (e.g. politics).

In ancient Greece, Aristotle was an important figure when it came to happiness. He was a celebrated philosopher, and the tutor of Alexander the Great, and would become a central figure in the creation of West-

ern philosophy. We don't know if Aristotle ever heard the Buddha's teachings, but there were certainly significant connections between ancient Greece and the East.

Like the Buddha before him, Aristotle had his ideas about what made people happy, and he wrote them down in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. He believed happiness was more than a simple emotion, and he told people that they should seek happiness in the practice of virtue. In short: Aristotle believed happiness (he used the word *eudaimonia*) was a goal in itself. In the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,³ he writes that everybody agrees that happiness is the Supreme Good, but that people disagree over what constitutes it. He further writes that happiness must be the highest achievement because we can pursue it for its own sake, which cannot be said of many other things, if any.

Then back to India again, but a couple of hundred years later (around 150 BC), where the teachings of the Buddha had moved to a new stage. Patanjali had compiled his famous Yoga Sutras: a collection of aphorisms on Yogic practice. Yoga, both the philosophy and the system of exercises that is now linked to it, is still hugely popular today, and the number of practitioners is growing in many countries. The ultimate goal of Yoga is the 'unification' of a person with the cosmos. Known as non-duality in some traditions, this concept has survived in many of the spiritual traditions we have today (Advaita Vedanta, Zen, Dzogchen and also the Islamic Sufism, which was strongly influenced by Yogic practices). Certainly, not all practitioners join yoga classes today with the traditional goals in mind, but the teaching is implicitly present in many beliefs and practices present in these classes.

If we follow the arrow of time further we enter the era where monotheistic religions appear, such as Christianity, Judaism and, later, Islam. These religions significantly changed the way happiness was viewed, and many of the concepts and words we use today originated from those religious environments.

Monotheism essentially teaches that there is one god and that submission to that god is the main way to a happy and meaningful life. This notion is inherently different from religions that existed before, like Hinduism with its 330 million gods, or Buddhism that stated that the self is inherently empty, and that there is no god. The impact of Christianity, Judaism and Islam is huge in today's society, since their followers together make up more than 55% of the world's population. Therefore, the words used on the planet to describe topics like happiness, meaning and the 'good life' are often associated with religious concepts.

After an age where not much happened in terms of great thinking in the West (the so-called Dark Ages), the topic of happiness was discovered again by philosophers like Descartes and Da Vinci. Descartes famously appointed the pineal gland in the brain as the 'seat of the soul, where all thoughts originate'. With this belief, he functionally divided soul and body, a belief that still exists in modern society. The belief is powerful since it implicitly addresses the notion of immortality: when the body dies, the soul might not.

However beautiful his theory was, Descartes never found any real proof to support it. The notion of a body and soul remains in the spotlight to this very day, and famous research attempts — like MacDougall famously placing six dying patients on a weight scale and reporting that they all became 21 grams lighter at the moment of death⁴ — have since been used in popular culture (e.g. the 2003 movie *21 Grams*, by Alejandro Gonzalez Inárritu). Also, a Dutch cardiologist by the name of Pim van Lommel recently brought the topic into the spotlight again by claiming that the near death experiences people experience cannot solely be explained by our current neurological understanding through, for example, a lack of oxygen to specific brain regions.⁵

Another famous thinker, Leonardo Da Vinci, expressed a different view on happiness that would later be copied by psychologists like Abraham Maslow in his now famous pyramid of human needs.⁶ Da Vinci, who is seen by many to be the greatest genius that ever lived,⁷ mentioned that he found happiness in striving to achieve his creative, spiritual

and intellectual potential, which he called self-mastery, a concept that Maslow would later call self-actualisation. Da Vinci's pursuit of mastery has resulted in some of the most beautiful art ever produced, with famous examples like the *Mona Lisa*, the *Vitruvian Man* and the *Last Supper*. In short, Da Vinci rephrased the 'pursuit of happiness' to the 'happiness of pursuit'.

Jeremy Bentham, in the late 18th Century, and John Stuart Mill, in the early 19th century, continued the work on happiness. Both Bentham and Mill were proponents of utilitarianism, stressing the doctrine that actions are good if they are for the benefit of the majority. Bentham, in his famous *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781) stated that happiness was an inherent part of human nature, and that it could be quantified. Bentham believed in quantifying happiness, pleasure and pain, and he came up with a method now seen as his 'hedonistic calculus'. In Bentham's view, you would have to know the intensity, duration, certainty or uncertainty of the next stimulus, plus some other things, to calculate the value of pleasure and pain. It proved necessary to include a measure for whatever sensation came after the initial one, since pain is much easier to bear knowing it will stop soon. Bentham was essentially the first to design a happiness algorithm, and his focus on the practicalities and tangible nature of happiness is still used to this day.

John Stuart Mill later built on the vision by Bentham, advocating the famous 'greatest happiness principle',⁸ which states that one must always act so as to produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. He also distinguished multiple levels of happiness, where Bentham had believed all forms of happiness were equal. For Mills, intellectual and moral pleasures were superior to physical pleasures.

Later, in the 20th century, researcher Paul Ekman travelled from the US to Papua New Guinea to investigate if human emotions, including positive states of experience, were universal. What he found has dramatically changed the way we view emotions: all humans, even preliterate cultures like the Fore tribe he visited for his research, possess the same

basic emotions.⁹ Ekman found that people will understand your basic expressions of emotion wherever you are on the planet.

Ekman's finding was a significant achievement, because it shows that emotions are inherently present in our species, independent of where we grow up and who teaches us how to express our emotions. In fact, they seem to be so fundamental to our behaviour and interpretation of the world that they form our 'quick guide' to navigate the world we live in,¹⁰ and this can be done without a lot of conscious effort.¹¹

I'm happy to say that the 20th and 21st century are filled with great researchers on the topic of happiness. Consider, for example, Richard Davidson, who was one the first to empirically document the impact of mindfulness meditation on our well-being by measuring brain activity of monks during meditation,¹² or Martin Seligman, who studied a wide range of topics related to happiness, including learned optimism.¹³

Other researchers that followed include Barbara Fredrickson, famous for the positivity ratio in conversations and her work on the value of experiencing positive emotions (advocating a 3:1 ratio with regard to positive and negative responses; a useful ratio for team performance),¹⁴ and Sonja Lyubomirsky, who has great analyses in the pragmatic science of how to be happier in life.¹⁵ In fact, current interest in the field of well-being is so large that governments have also committed to do some serious, well-funded research in the field. A great example is the Human Brain Project, a European project sponsored by 24 countries to achieve a unified multi-level interpretation of the brain. A bit more scary, but with huge beneficial potential as well, are the DARPA¹⁶ projects. The currently famous project is called ElectRx, where researchers look at brain implants in order to modulate neuron activity. This, of course, could be used in the future to enhance mental function and well-being of individuals fitted with the implants, but many fear that DARPA will use the same technology to create 'open loop implants' that are constantly connected to the internet in order to make superhuman soldiers.

So, the 21st century may well hold many surprises when it comes to well-being. It is expected that the topic will be much better understood than in the past: ways to measure personal or organisational well-being will be available for little money, and ways to positively modify our well-being will be well understood. We are then, for the first time, on the brink of understanding happiness in all its complexity as a species. The brain scans we use today (fMRI, PET, SPECT, DTI) can already detect activity in different parts of the brain in real time, and monitor the impact of different interventions on our levels of well-being. To give you an example: it is currently believed that feeling happy coincides with specific brain activation patterns, where the left prefrontal cortex (LPC) is associated with positive effects and the control of negative effects, where the right prefrontal cortex (RPC) seems to produce sensations of more negative emotions when it's active.¹⁷ The ratio that follows from this, called the LPC:RPC ratio by researchers, appears to be a reliable indicator for how great someone feels, although there are also some doubts whether this stance is not too simplistic.¹⁸

The fact remains that we have many smart, new ways to assess how well people feel from moment to moment in their daily lives, and new innovations in this field appear with lightning speed. Just a few years ago, our data on well-being was primarily based on surveys that asked people to reflect on how well they were doing in life (e.g. 'All things considered, how well would you say you are these days on a scale of 1–10?'). Today, using a smartphone, it is possible to measure in real time, combined with GPS coordinates (i.e. where you are) and what you are doing, how you feel while doing it.¹⁹ Finally, we can also see more about how happiness actually translates into behaviour, and the other way around. Some examples: we know that happy people are generally more sociable, use more approach goals (things they want to achieve) rather than avoidance goals (things they want to avoid). We also know that for many people, the daily hour of commuting is the least happy time of the day.²⁰

Let me summarise this chapter in a single sentence: we have never known so much about our well-being as we do today, but we haven't

truly translated our knowledge to our lives and our organisations. We, therefore, need to find a way to keep developing our knowledge on the topic, while making the information we gather universally accessible and user-friendly for all people and organisations. In this book, I present some ways to do this, for yourself and your organisation. I have tried and tested the solutions featured in this book extensively over the last few years, and hope they will reap the same benefits for you as they have for me. I'm fully aware that these are in no way definitive answers, and I don't pretend that they are. I simply hope that these thoughts can bring the topic back to the attention of more people who are willing to develop this field together.

1.2

THE PROBLEMS WE FACE TODAY

As described in the previous section, we have come a long way when it comes to well-being. History works strongly in our favour here; we have come up with and tried many different approaches and are now at a breakthrough moment in history where, this century, we may well be able to measure the well-being of the entire planet with high precision. That reason alone is enough to get well-being on the agenda today.

But that's not all, there are more important reasons why we should focus on well-being today. In this chapter, I will focus on four main arguments. Firstly, I will show you that the way we measure progress in society is incomplete at the moment, measuring GDP where more information has to be included to account for our real well-being. Secondly, I will try to show that there is a need in society for change, since people are less happy than we'd expect them to be given their financial situation. Thirdly, I will show that organisations should play a big role here, but don't at the moment, as they continue with the old ways of doing business. I will finish this chapter with my view on how to move forward from here.

Let's start with how we intend to measure progress in countries: GDP (gross domestic product). GDP was proposed by Simon Kuznets for the US Congress in 1934, and it soon became the main tool to measure the economic progress of societies. Kuznets, however, warned that measuring economic output is not the same as measuring the welfare of people, and he was right: if you believe that a growing economic output will lead to an infinitely better well-being of the people producing the goods, then you're mistaken. We have almost tripled our real income over the last 50 years and have never had so many luxury items and as much income as we do today. But we haven't grown much happier, if at all.²¹ Making money matters less than most people think.

The economist Richard Easterlin found that there is indeed a positive correlation between income and satisfaction with life,²² but only up to a certain point, roughly US \$75,000 per year.²³ Above that level, the correlation is only positive when you put income on a logarithmic scale (meaning: you would need to double your income to see a positive impact on life satisfaction). You can see the research summarised in the graph below, produced by Kahneman and Deaton (2010). It shows money affects well-being (called 'ladder' in this graph, after the Cantril Ladder measurement of happiness, more on that later) positively, but that the scale becomes logarithmic after US\$75,000. The amount of positive effect, or lack of negative effect ('not blue') normalises from that point, as does the amount of stress.

Other evidence for the fact that money doesn't contribute to our eternal well-being comes from tracking our happiness levels over time. A study done by Easterlin, Michalos and Sirgy (2011) shows that people in Japan scored around 6 out of 10 ten on life satisfaction in 1958 and had roughly the same scores 30 years later despite the strong economic growth Japan experienced in that period. Another study showed that the amount of 'very happy people' in the US stayed the same over the period 1955–2005, even though the average income soared to levels never seen before.²⁴ More recent articles show a similar trend; although money is indeed correlated to happiness when you use a logarithmic scale,²⁵ its effects are not sufficient to justify money as the central con-

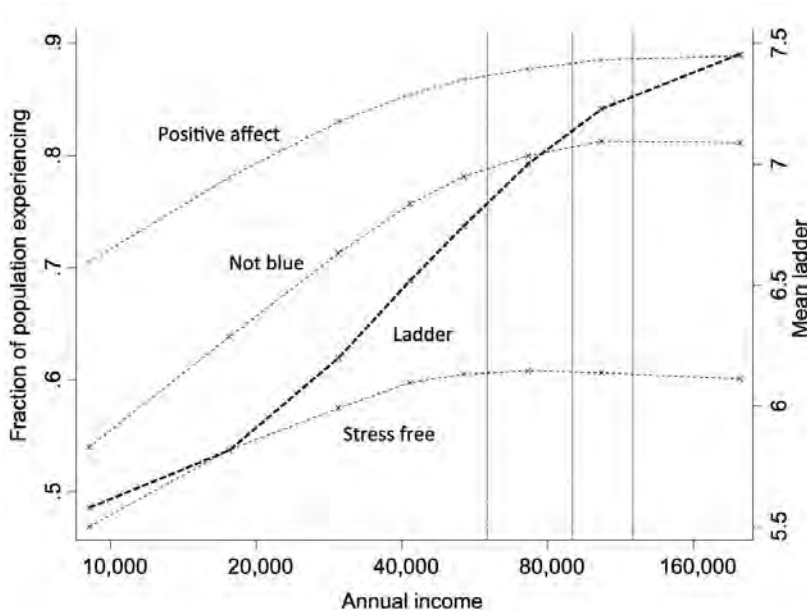


Figure 8 Life satisfaction increases when we earn more, but money loses most of its impact above US\$ 75,000 per year

tributor to our well-being, especially not in developed countries. Also, research seems to show the social experience of having money may be more important than the absolute amount in your bank account, with people in emerging economies doing almost equally well as the ‘rich’ countries on the life satisfaction scale.²⁶

To conclude: money affects our well-being, but the impact is smaller than most people believe, and it mainly affects people who do not have enough of it. Money is, therefore, certainly not the only thing to focus on when we aspire to create more fulfilling lives for people. We need a more complete model to measure the progress of our societies. The first attempt is already here: the GNH (gross national happiness) index, as designed by the Bhutanese government. You can find out more about this easily online.²⁷

So, our model for measuring progress in society needs to be updated, but there is an even more urgent reason to consider well-being at

this moment. Research suggests that just 17–30% of our population is ‘flourishing’²⁹ (meaning: perceiving oneself as leading an engaged, happy and meaningful life; more on that definition in the next chapter). Meanwhile, levels of depression have increased tenfold since the 1960s,³⁰ and we suffer from serious physical challenges with 69% of our population being overweight (in the United States, that is).³¹

When it comes to experiencing purpose in life, we find that roughly one in every five participants in our workshops feels they have enough clarity in that aspect of life, and the ones that do not are usually greatly troubled by it. A similar ratio was recently quoted in a *Harvard Business Review* article on blue ocean leadership,³² where the authors reported that, in their experience, just one in every five leaders had a clear purpose.

These are harsh facts, considering that most people will list ‘living a happy/meaningful life’ among the things that matter most to them.³³ Moreover, out of the 3,500 people I have spoken to in the last year in business, most seem to intuitively agree. I usually ask my crowds: ‘If you

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Mistaken beliefs about money

People still greatly overestimate the role money plays in their lives, even though the Easterlin paradox (which states that ‘high incomes do correlate with happiness, but long-term, increased income doesn’t correlate with increased happiness’) has been well documented and reported in newspapers. Psychologists attribute this to an effect they call the ‘focusing illusion’:²⁸ if we think solely about one thing and how that relates to our well-being, we tend to overestimate its power. So, when we’re asked whether we think a lot of money makes us happier, many of us tend to think that’s correct. But, at that moment, we forget that there are 1,000 other variables attached to living a fulfilling life.

imagine yourself walking through your home town, how many people on the street do you think would consider themselves as “flourishing” if you asked them?’ The crowds usually agree that this must be a 1:10 or 1:5 ratio. And they are right. The stunning part here is not even the number itself, but the fact that nobody seems to really be trying to implement the science of well-being on a large scale in organisations and/or societies.

Let me dive in deep on the physical well-being part. As explained above, 69% of US citizens are overweight, and a staggering 35% are obese.³⁴ Most experts expect these numbers to rise further in the next decade. As well as affecting our physical and mental health, this trend is also

EXPERIENCE

Finding purpose in work

I vividly remember the first time I discussed ‘purpose’ with the leadership of a large organisation in the Netherlands. I was invited as a guest speaker and had requested the group to fill in a survey on the nature of their own well-being beforehand. The survey included one (1–7) scale on ‘meaning’ (e.g.: ‘I do things that contribute to a larger cause’), on which they didn’t do well at all. In the session, I decided to just give them the numbers directly, saying: ‘Guys, overall you seem to be doing quite OK, except for the meaning dimension, where your scores are lower than the average war veteran with post-traumatic stress.’ I will never forget what happened next: the atmosphere in the group became icy and people were silent. After a minute or so, their leader looked around the room and asked: ‘What motherfucker filled in that this is all not meaningful?’ I responded that 9 out of 11 people had done that, and asked why they were so bothered. His response: ‘How are we going to tell others it’s meaningful to be here, when we don’t think so ourselves?’ The next day they requested a ‘meaning day’ to have a good discussion on this.

extremely costly for society. In the US alone, the problems associated with obesity cost the country around \$147 billion dollars every year.³⁵

Part of the reason seems to lie in the way we work and live nowadays. Our brains still work the same way as our ancient ancestors' brains (evolution is slow). Today, many of us spend around 7–8 hours sitting still, just processing information. At the same time, the daily information load we face is higher than ever: as a species we now create as much information in two days as all our ancestors had done until the year 2003.³⁶

It is, therefore, no wonder that many of us feel regularly overloaded with information. Estimates suggest that about 60–90% of doctor visits are stress related.³⁷ In a recent survey, called *Attitudes in the American Workplace VII*, 80% of workers reported stress on the job, and nearly half of them said they needed help in learning how to manage stress. Also, 42% mentioned that their co-workers could use this help, and 73% mentioned that they would not want their boss's job in the future.³⁸

Stress, and the fact that we fail to move around enough, are both strong contributors to our poor physical well-being and, again, there is a serious business case attached to it: the World Health Organization estimates that stress costs American business around \$300 billion per year.

In short, we have become a sedentary species, consuming information, and most of us are not happy. Some early indications show that we could indeed change the way we work, and it would make us happier. Entrepreneurs, who have more freedom to structure their work environment, are generally happier than people who do not own their own business. Stress also plays a part again: entrepreneurs with established businesses seem to be happier than those running start-ups.³⁹ In future organisations, we will need to make some serious changes to the way we (perceive) work, and change our habits on a personal and organisational level.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The amount of flourishing people

Imagine yourself walking through your hometown, meeting your friends and loved ones. How many of these people do you think would describe themselves as 'flourishing'?

And what would happen if you changed your hometown to the organisation you work for?

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Why it's hard to change habits

Why is it so hard to change our habits, even when we know they're unhealthy?

Our species, *Homo sapiens*, has only existed for roughly 200,000 years. For a while, we roamed this planet together with our closest cousins, *Homo neanderthalensis* (or the Neanderthals), but they died out some 40,000 years ago, leaving us as the only self-aware species on the planet,⁴⁰ and possibly in the universe.⁴¹ Still, given our previous lifestyle, where we didn't need to use our conscious brains too much when out running, hunting or collecting berries, our brains have evolved to operate mostly automatically. The reason for this is simple: energy conservation. What can be done without our conscious interference should ideally be done like that, and it often leads to better results as well.⁴² Today, most of us are no longer in need of so many calories, but our old (mostly subconscious) habits to preserve energy persist. In short: we have DNA that's 200,000 years old, but evolution has not yet changed our system so that we can work on recent developments like PCs (IBM, 1981) and iPhones (Apple, 2007).

I've said that we need to rethink how we measure progress in society. Next to that, I have shown that there is a serious need, and a business case, for increased levels of well-being in our society. But in the end, who should take on the daunting task of making people happier on a large scale? In my view, this job can only be done by the organisations we work for. The reason is simple: leverage. Change an organisation and you change thousands with it. Change products slightly and you may impact millions, or even billions, of customers.⁴³

Governments can do their part, of course, installing different measurements to generate data in their societies and providing tax benefits for those involved in the well-being sector. Individuals can also have a great effect on their direct environment, and I believe many of us try to do that already. Still, there's significant room for improvement, and the push we need in this direction can only come from organisations where 'productising' meaningful well-being initiatives can reach the scale and numbers necessary.

I would advocate for a strong upgrade from our current thinking, where 'Don't Be Evil'⁴⁴ is no longer the norm, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments are no longer made solely responsible for the good things a company does. 'Don't Be Evil' is a powerless statement that everybody would agree with, but without any real direction or implementation value. It leans on two thoughts (do good, and comply with legal advisors, probably). In my view, it should be rewritten to 'Do Good, Period', and include measurements on what you have accomplished in this area.⁴⁵ Second, the CSR departments aren't powerful enough, simply because they are mostly separated from the real value chain. They are not part of how the company actually makes money.

The trick will be to build business models that incorporate Purpose+ Profit (purpose first, hence our company name!) in the model from the start. It would let organisations work with a 'positive sum game' mind-set, rather than 'zero sum game' beliefs. Any other initiative that's separate from the real business, like CSR at the moment, will

be like filling a bucket that is full of holes. The trend I'm advocating is very similar to what was recently published by the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations (2013),⁴⁶ a report that highlights all the megatrends on the planet. The main conclusion: although we have been able to realise some great, overarching initiatives as a species (examples include the International Space Station, the Global Seed Vault storing all seeds on the planet, and possibly the Kyoto Protocol), most of us are too self-obsessed to help the species survive in the long run. And so are our businesses. We need a new perspective, one that takes the view of 'humanity' rather than 'me', to sustain life for the long term on our planet. In my view, organisations will have to play a big role in this.

1.3

THE OPPORTUNITY: BUILDING A NEW BUSINESS PARADIGM

The problems we face are hopefully now clear. So how do we move forward? In my view, the best approach is scientific pragmatism. Scientific knowledge, measured by scientists and covered in scientific journals, has been doubling every ten to twenty years for over a century,⁴⁷ and holds many great insights for the future of business. I will explain what I mean. When I worked as a consultant, I first researched the 'science of happiness' market out of curiosity. What I found was incredibly interesting; there were many researchers in the field (universities like Oxford, Cambridge, University of Pennsylvania, University of California, even the United Nations), and quite some tools available to assess well-being.⁴⁸ There was data available for free in large databases, notably the World Database of Happiness⁴⁹ built by Ruut Veenhoven.

Still, there was no one in the field making life better on a large scale, using the science that was already available. While exploring the subject further, I met some key people, like Tal Ben-Shahar (who taught the famous happiness courses at Harvard), Jigme Thinley (the ex-prime minister of Bhutan who installed gross national happiness instead of

GDP) and Jan Walburg (professor in positive psychology at Twente University in the Netherlands). I discovered through talking with them that there was a serious need for people who were willing to get their hands dirty.

Tal in particular told me that he had not heard of any prior cases like the ones I was involved in, which, at the time, was implementing these concepts in elite sports teams. Jan Walburg explained clearly that he wanted me to move there, and would send students to help me analyse the data. Jigme even refused to answer my question on ‘what they had actually done to positively affect future measurements in Bhutan’. When he was asked that again later by someone else, he still didn’t answer. To this day, I think that although Bhutan may have the measurements in place, they are not there yet with applying proven methods to make it better on a large scale.

So, through my research, I found that *we may have some insights into the topic, but we haven’t been able to translate our knowledge on well-being into a full-scale solution to make life better*. This idea was strengthened when I explained my new business model to friends at McKinsey, where I got some surprised reactions: ‘So, happiness IS the business model?’ As they say, when everybody agrees with your idea, you’re already too late. Then there are only two options: either there is an untapped market (a blue ocean),⁵⁰ or there is no market at all. I decided that there was a significant chance it was the latter.

What we need now are people who are willing to make well-being/happiness their business model, people willing to experiment, willing to fail even. We also need company leaders who are willing to get their hands dirty (luckily I’ve found many, as you’ll see later in this book), who are open to discuss a more meaningful business paradigm that includes, among other things, well-being. And that’s where the scientific pragmatism comes in: we should dare to run experiments with radical optimism, collecting data with scientific rigour as we go. It may fail, but it will be worth the effort.

Considering the numbers on well-being mentioned earlier, what difference would it make if we integrated the science of happiness with the way we work? Here's a synthesis of correlational findings that compare people who are doing well ('flourishing') to people that are not doing so well.⁵¹ Findings show that, for happier people:

- + They generally live longer.
- + They show higher individual output at work.
- + They are perceived as better leaders.
- + They earn more, in general.
- + They tend to have more energy.
- + They spend more time at work focused on the work itself.
- + They have better functioning immune systems and are sick less often.
- + They have lower levels of cardiovascular disease.
- + They are more likely to get married, and stay married longer.
- + They are more creative.
- + They pursue more 'approach goals' (things they want), rather than 'avoidance goals' (things they want to avoid).
- + They have a richer network of friends.
- + They are perceived by others as more helpful and friendly.
- + They are more altruistic, spend more time on altruistic activities.
- + They are more resilient in tough times.
- + They experience more positive emotions.
- + They have a lower chance of falling into a depression in life.
- + They are more grateful for life.
- + They are more forgiving.
- + They tend to be more optimistic, coping better with difficult moments in life.

These findings may surprise you, or may not. Some people I explain these to are completely blown away, while others tell me they already intuitively knew this and are not surprised. Regardless of how you took it, the fact remains that a) happiness is seen by most people as the single most important pursuit in life, b) we're not as happy as we could be, and c) our happiness directly affects many other aspects in life, including our performance at work.

The science of happiness is not fully embedded in the way we work these days. Many companies, even though they face extreme difficulties, hold on to a paradigm that's being challenged quite severely today: the focus on economic growth above all other things, with short-term shareholder value as the key driver behind the model. This paradigm is based on industrial era structures of control and management. It stresses hierarchy, motivates people to 'move up the ladder' in order to earn more and relies primarily on extrinsic motivation (e.g. earnings). Sadly, it often fails to incorporate real meaning and pleasure in work, and it is no wonder engagement levels are historically low at the moment, with just 13% of our global workforce engaged at work.⁵² It has also led to many negative examples of business behaviour, e.g. the greed shown by financial executives that (partly) caused the recent economic crisis.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Best moments in life

To experience happiness in the moment, a useful strategy is to be more mindful of the good moments that have already happened to you. We experience life as a chain of moments, and that's pretty much all we have. Therefore, being better able to remember the good times is a powerful thing. Try this exercise:

Think back to a single peak experience (beautiful moment) you have had in the last 12 months. Write the moment down, including how you felt, and who you were with. Feel free to discuss this moment with others, I guarantee it will be worth your while. Reflecting on your peak experiences can help you become more aware of the good moments you have already experienced and makes it easier to create new peak experiences in the future. Tip: if you want others to open up, it's usually best to start with yourself, telling your own story first.

In my opinion, this old way of working is withering and could well be gone within a couple of decades. I, therefore, wasn't surprised when Ban Ki-moon stated his views in 2011 about a new business paradigm being needed for our species to be successful in the long run.⁵³ According to Ban, our current business model simply fails to produce long-term sustainable benefits for our species. Among other things, it fails to acknowledge higher fundamental human needs, like meaning, pleasure and autonomy in the way we work. For the next generations, for the planet, work simply *has* to become more meaningful, and we *have to* focus on more than just monetary rewards.

This paradigm shift will be directly felt by all of us, but I expect it will be led by social entrepreneurs, and become highly successful with it. Ricardo Semler, head of a Brazilian organisation called Semco, is one such example, and so is Elon Musk, founder of Tesla. In my view, a good, less well-known, third one, needs to be mentioned: Willy Smits. Willy Smits is a Dutch biologist and forest engineer who has found a way to restore rainforests that's more profitable than cutting them down to generate palm oil.

What these entrepreneurs have in common is not only innovative thinking, but also the fact that they live the new business paradigm:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Well-being and performance

Think back to a specific phase in your life where you performed very well. How well were you doing as a person in that period?

Please write down how you felt in that particular phase of your life, and what helped you reach that state.

Then answer this question: how important do you think your general happiness is to how you perform at work?

they combine purpose and profit in the core of their business models. The new era will have to incorporate ‘higher’ human needs, such as pleasure, meaning and autonomy, in the way businesses work with their employees — who may well be called ‘partners’ in the future. At an organisational level, it will mean that we measure purpose with the same rigour as we measure profit (using methods such as EBIT — earnings before interest and taxes). This can be done, as I will show you later in this book. In short, the paradigm shift will entail the following developments:

From (current paradigm)	To (new paradigm)
Profit	Purpose+Profit
Focus on self, and helping own organisation survive (zero sum game thinking)	Focus on overarching, higher complexity goals where collaboration is needed (positive sum game thinking)
Linear thinking; incremental impact	Exponential thinking; exponential impact

Table 1: Towards a more purpose-driven way of doing business

In Chapter 4, I’ll explain what this shift will mean for the way we work, with specific details on how it will affect each different level of an organisation.

2

WHAT MAKES US DO WELL?

2.1

BUILDING BLOCKS OF WELL-BEING

I usually start workshops on happiness with a simple exercise. I write the word 'happiness' on a flip chart and ask people in the room to tell me what they think generates happiness, or well-being, in life. The answers vary widely, I have heard everything from 'smelling fresh coffee' to 'deep conversations with a loved one' and 'sex'. All answers can be true, of course, but it's amazing to see how few people understand what the real drivers behind their happiness are, even though the feeling is so fundamental to our lives. Therefore, this chapter is about what really makes us happy. I will explain the latest model of well-being, the part that we attribute to our genetic makeup, the role that circumstances can play, and the part that we control through intentional activity.

In the past, researchers have often mistakenly equated well-being with 'feeling good'. Although they were partly right (most people would definitely mention 'feeling good' as part of their well-being), they soon realised something was missing. Think about it, if you lived your life with only positive emotions, would that satisfy you enough? Would you truly feel fulfilled?

Most people say no to this question since they feel that something would still be missing. That something is what most people call meaning, or purpose — the fact that your life matters to more people than yourself. This insight led scientists to conclude that happiness

PERSONAL INSIGHT

Factors contributing to happiness

To get some initial insights into what contributes to your well-being, I invite you to make a mind map with all the relevant factors. To do this, you'll need a piece of paper and a pen.

The exercise: write ME in the middle of the page. Then start putting all the factors that influence your happiness levels around it. You may include friends, exercise, experiences, and anything else you feel is relevant to you. Feel free to draw arrows from the factors to your 'ME' box. You can make the arrows thicker if the factor is more powerful to you. You can also colour code your arrows to make different categories, e.g. green for friends, red for physical health, yellow for work-related aspects, etc. This exercise can give you your first clue as to what is important to your happiness and will allow you to review your own thinking on happiness.

is basically structured around two main chunks of emotional value: pleasure and meaning.

Since the hunt for a solid happiness model started, research has progressed steadily. Researchers like Martin Seligman, Tayyab Rashid, Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ed Diener, Barbara Fredrickson and Amy Wrzesniewski¹ have published great new scientific material on happiness, while organisations, such as Gallup and McKinsey & Company, have come up with ways to make the 'fluffy' stuff in companies visible and tangible. The focus right now is on developing a practical model to bring well-being and meaning back to businesses, in order to affect them positively. This model obviously needs to be sharp, easy to understand, and pragmatic enough to use in organisations where people are not specialised in the field.

In my view, Martin Seligman's book *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being, and How to Achieve Them* (2011) was a breakthrough in this area. Seligman, a former head of the American Psychological Association, essentially made it his mission to spread the existing knowledge on well-being to the world. His concept of well-being is therefore backed by science. Seligman described five drivers behind our well-being — all of which we can positively influence.² His model is called PERMA.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

The chair experiment

When I work with groups and explain what science has to say about our well-being, I usually grab a chair from the room and put it in front of the group. I then say: 'I want you to imagine the following: what if I told you that this chair would spark positive emotions in your brain for the rest of your life if you acquired it. It would make you feel good, all the time. There's only one problem, as soon as you sit on it, you cannot leave the chair anymore, and will have to stay in this room. Would you like to buy this chair from me? It's on sale today for only 9.99!'

People usually look puzzled after this question. Then one person mentions it could be quite boring to only sit on the chair. I then respond that you wouldn't notice that, since the chair would spark positive emotions anyway. Then the conversation becomes deeper; people mention that painful moments can also be beautiful, and that life is not just about being happy yourself, but also about making others happier.

Would you buy the chair?

I have included the dimensions here with a short explanation.

- + **Positive emotions:**³ the amount of positive emotions we experience.
- + **Engagement:** the experience of flow, absorption we experience.
- + **Relationships:**^{4,5} the perceived quality of the relationships we hold with others.
- + **Meaning:**⁶ the feeling that we're contributing to a higher purpose, something bigger than ourselves.
- + **Accomplishment:** the feeling that we're successful and 'progressing' in life.

Let me make three notes on this model, features that I usually explain to groups when I see them. First, all these dimensions are subjective, they are always assessed by the person. This is currently the only way to assess well-being since, even if we were able to measure absolute quantities of hormones or neurotransmitters, these substances affect different people in different ways. So, we'd rather ask people what they are experiencing so they can describe it themselves. Second, money is not in the model. As discussed in the previous chapter, the amount of

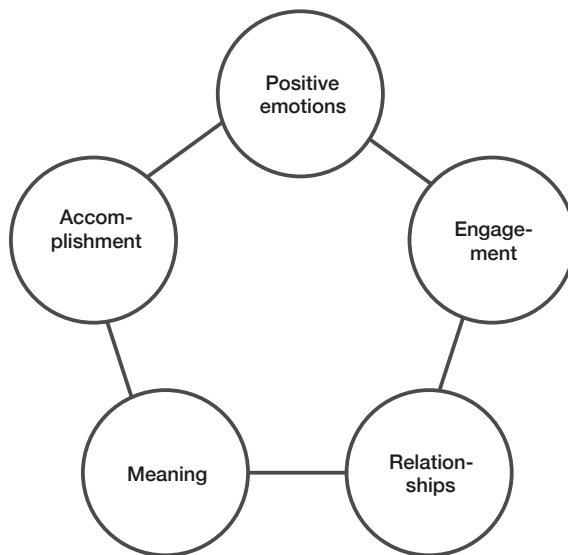


Figure 9 The PERMA model, advocated by Martin Seligman (2011).

money we have is not as strong a predictor of our well-being as many people seem to believe. A third note is the lack of ‘vitality’, or ‘health’. Although it’s true that people who aren’t healthy can still be happy (a reason not to include it), I believe good health can function as a catalyst. I therefore believe that PERMA+V will be the future, and use that model with most of my clients. I have also classified the techniques mentioned later in this book according to their possible impact on the PERMA+V dimensions.

The beauty of this new model is threefold: first, it creates focus. Rather than pursuing 1,001 things that might make us happy, the focus is on just five things that we know to have the greatest effect. Second, it makes measuring well-being easier, since all five factors can be assessed scientifically using questionnaires. To give you an example of what a measurement could look like, take a look at the graph below. The PERMA scores featured here are a good representation of people’s general scores.

The last benefit of the model is that its multidimensional nature can free us of hierarchical judgements. What I mean is that, if we have only one dimension of happiness — for example, being happy or not, enlightened or not — a hierarchy between people can easily be per-

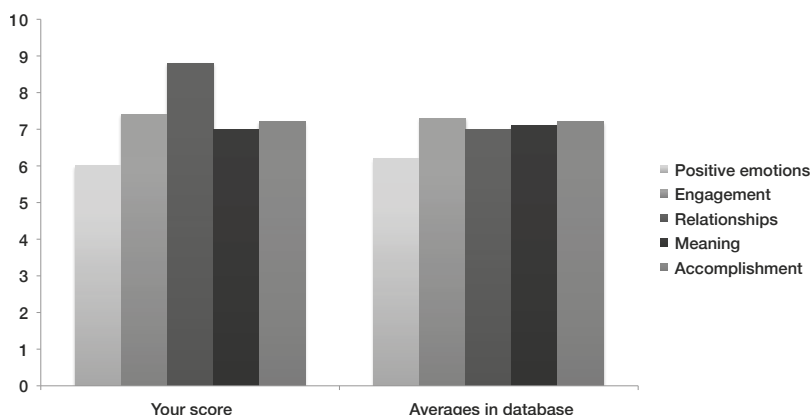


Figure 10 Example scores on the PERMA Profiler survey⁷

EXPERIENCE

Happiness surveys

I remember when I tested myself for the first time on these five dimensions. I discovered that my scores for engagement, meaning and accomplishment were great, but that I had lower scores for positive emotions and relationships. My girlfriend at the time had almost the opposite: her strengths were positive relationships and positive emotions. This helped us to have a conversation on how to build happy lives for ourselves and what we valued in the process. She liked spending a lot of time with friends, loved to recapture great moments we'd experienced, seemed very aware of beautiful moments when they occurred, and had done many things to capture the good stuff (e.g. we had a photo board of great memories in the bathroom). She was simply a star when it came to building relationships and experiencing positive emotions. My scores, on the other hand, showed a preference for setting goals, reaching them and absorbing myself fully in the moment in order to reach those goals. I therefore spend a lot of time studying new material, usually with noise cancellation headphones so I won't be disturbed. This is obviously not a very sociable thing to do, but after having this discussion we understood each other better.

Note that calculating your PERMA values can be a painful process for some people, especially those who are experiencing problems. I remember completing my first survey on gratitude, and scoring in the lowest 5%. I think the finding is probably correct (I don't take much time to reflect on what's good in my life and am always building and working on new things), but the outcome still bothers me a little.

ceived. Just imagine if you sat next to someone in a workshop who scored 8 out of 10 on a happiness scale while your score is only 6. This might make you feel uncomfortable, and it won't give you any guidelines on how to improve your happiness. This is another reason for using PERMA over a simpler measurement. The topic is so relevant to all of us that we cannot afford to create a judgemental atmosphere around it.

The scores reflect how someone is feeling at a particular moment. In this case, we can conclude the following:

- + This person seems to be doing well, with a 7.2 average, which is a slightly higher score than most people (the downwards sloping line represents the average score).
- + This person is experiencing moderate amounts of positive emotions, engagement, meaning and accomplishment.
- + This person's main strength seems to be in the relationships corner with a score of 8.7 out of 10.

My experience with this model is that people will have different natural strengths and weaknesses that are worth investigating, especially in conversations with loved ones and, if the culture allows it, with their immediate colleagues.

If you want to know more about your own well-being at this moment, I invite you to try the surveys yourself. We currently host a number of well-being surveys online, ranging from overall well-being (PERMA) to more specific things like mindfulness, gratitude and stress levels. They are all freely accessible and hosted with the permission of the universities involved. Below is a list of all the surveys with a short explanation. You can find all of them by going to our web page: www.purposeplus.co. I highly recommend that you fill in some of the surveys to make the content of this book more personally relevant.

Survey	What it will show you	Time it takes to fill in	Relevant experts
PERMA Profiler	Your scores on Seligman's PERMA dimensions, including extra scores on 'negative affect' and 'loneliness', compared to the current database (of more than 11,000 scores)	7 minutes	Julie Butler, Margaret L. Kern, University of Pennsylvania
Life Satisfaction	Your general satisfaction with life, measured on a 1–10 scale	2 minutes	Ed Diener
Subjective Happiness	Your general happiness score on a 1–7 scale. This survey is popular since it only has 4 questions	2 minutes	Sonja Lyubomirsky, University of California
Best Fit Survey	Insights into what proven happiness boosters fit you best as a person	12 minutes	Sonja Lyubomirsky, University of California
Five Facet Mindfulness	Insights into how mindful you are, on 5 underlying dimensions of mindfulness	10 minutes	Ruth A. Baer, Gregory T. Smith, Jaclyn Hopkins, Jennifer Krietemeyer, and Leslie Toney, University of Kentucky
Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)	Insights into how much stress you experience in daily life	3 minutes	Sheldon Cohen, Carnegie Mellon University
Gratitude	Insights into how grateful you are	2 minutes	Michael McCullough, University of Miami
Work Orientation	Insights into how you perceive your work: as a job, career or calling	2 minutes	Amy Wrzesniewski, Yale School of Management

Flourishing Scale	Insights into your personal well-being in just 7 questions	2 minutes	Ed Diener, Robert Biswas-Diener, University of Illinois
VIA Character Strengths	Insights into your unique strengths as a person	10 minutes	Tayyab Rashid, University of Toronto
Cantril Ladder	Insights into your overall well-being, and optimism for the future	1 minute	Hadley Cantril (died in 1969)
In the Zone (FLOW)	Insights into how much flow you are experiencing	7 minutes	Tayyab Rashid, University of Toronto
Positivity Ratio	Insights into your ratio between positive emotions and negative emotions	3 minutes	Barbara Fredrickson, University of North Carolina

Table 2: Free surveys on well-being, and what they can tell you

So, when are you ‘flourishing’ according to the survey? Scientific consensus defines flourishing in life as ‘the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively’.⁸ I have also heard people describe flourishing in an experiential manner as ‘being calm and moved at the same time’, which I found beautiful. But, when it comes to defining flourishing through the outcome of a survey, that remains a tricky question. One way is to compare results to the total database to draw a conclusion, and the standard we use for the people that fill out the survey with us is the following (based on the PERMA Profiler output):

- + A total, average score for all dimensions of 7 or higher.
- + No major weaknesses in the profile (minimum of 6 on all dimensions), especially not on dimensions that are strongly valued by the person who completed the survey.
- + One or more ‘strengths’ in the model that people truly display (+7.5 score), ideally on a dimension that’s valued strongly by the individual.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A quick and dirty happiness assessment

Here's a happiness scan that you can do in a minute or less. It's attributed to Hadley Cantril, an American researcher (1906–1969), who described in his book *Pattern of Human Concerns* (1966) a simple way to measure happiness. This survey is currently used in all the Gallup surveys on well-being, which are in turn used for the UN Happiness Report.

'Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from 0 at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.

On which step of the ladder do you personally feel that you stand at this time?

On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now?'

You are considered 'flourishing', or 'thriving', when you score your current life 7 or higher, and your future life 8 or higher. When you score your current life 4–7, OR your future life 4–7, you are in the 'struggling' category. Scoring below that puts you in the 'suffering' category. Research shows that flourishing people, according to this scale, have higher incomes, better health, take fewer sick days, have fewer worries, are less angry, have more social support and more positive emotions.

The line to define who's 'flourishing' and who's 'just OK' is an arbitrary one in the case of the PERMA Profiler, one that we have chosen to provide to give people something to consider. The PERMA Profiler survey doesn't come with official norms for 'flourishing' since the value of the survey lies in comparing scores with others in order to learn more about oneself and providing focus on where to improve life. Some other surveys, especially those that are used to provide statistics at country

level, do have these norm scores available. One such survey that is well known is the one used by Felicia Huppert and Timothy So in the European Social Survey.⁹ Here, you need to score highly on the central dimensions of pleasure, meaning and engagement in order to be regarded as flourishing (and are allowed to have lower scores on surrounding dimensions like self-esteem and competence). Another is the one used by Gallup and the UN — the so-called Cantril Ladder which you can try on our website as well. The essence in all surveys remains the same: you will have to score well on the core dimensions, without large weaknesses in the other dimensions, to be considered a ‘flourishing’ individual.

Below are the four different scientific conceptualisations of flourishing that have been developed so far — note that they are all very recent. They all encompass dimensions that are scientifically proven to have a significant effect on people’s lives, but they differ in what factor they value most. Since they differ, they also provide different numbers of flourishing people, the percentages shown in this table were based on a study with 10,009 adult New Zealanders,¹⁰ who are notoriously happy.¹¹

Survey developer	Characteristics included in survey	% happy people
Corey Keyes, 2002	Positive relationships, positive affect (interest, happiness), self-acceptance, social contribution, social integration, social growth, social acceptance, social coherence, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, life satisfaction	39%
Huppert & So, 2009	Positive relationships, engagement, meaning, self-esteem, positive emotion, competence, optimism, emotional stability, vitality, resilience	24%
Diener et al., 2010	Positive relationships, engagement, purpose and meaning, self-acceptance and self-esteem, competence, optimism, social contribution	41%
Seligman et al., 2011	Positive relationships, engagement, meaning and purpose, positive emotion, accomplishment/competence	47%

Table 3: Percentage of people flourishing per survey

In short, when we try to define flourishing, we have to jump over similar hurdles that physicists encounter when they enter the quantum realm: the measurement itself partly determines the outcome we'll find. We cannot measure the phenomenon of well-being without determining a measurement and thereby affecting what we find. If we choose a certain measurement, we choose a certain direction. However, I feel that an 80–20 solution,¹² where we choose pragmatism over scientific perfection, works well enough for now. It allows us to focus on the actual impact rather than philosophical and scientific debates about the remaining 20% of the model, which I'm sure will be a hot topic of debate for years to come. In the meantime, nothing stops us from already experimenting with science-based interventions to make life better for people.

To summarise my points in this chapter, I believe it's fair to say that the PERMA, or PERMA+Vitality, model of well-being is effective in building a pragmatic, working definition of well-being that can be used for our organisations. It is not a perfect measurement, however, and new ones will be developed in the coming years, but it is specific enough to provide us with insights, and organisations with a direction to move in.

2.2

WHY DESTINY IS MISUNDERSTOOD; THE REAL POWER OF GENES

Genes are inheritable components, present in our DNA, that we receive from our parents when we are conceived. They contain our blueprints, telling our bodies how to generate tissue in order to compose a great you. The fact that we carry inherited genes around, however, is not a reason to hold a deterministic view. In fact, the opposite is more true. In this chapter, I will try to explain why.

We carry genes around in all our bodily cells. When our cells divide to, for example, form new tissue, through a process called mitosis,¹³ the DNA first replicates and then two separate daughter cells are formed.

This is such a fundamental process that all life essentially depends on it. It is, therefore, no wonder that research in this field has been funded heavily in the past, with the most famous example being the Human Genome Project (HGP), which was set up to identify the exact sequence of our, human, genes. The HGP is still the world's largest collaborative biological project, and was funded by the US government at a cost of \$2.7 billion. It took from 1984 to 2003 to successfully map the complete human genome.¹⁴

The HGP has led to some surprising findings: all humans share 99.6% of the same DNA (talking about oneness!); 98% of our DNA is non-coding (not used for the direct synthesis of tissue, and is therefore called junk DNA); and we are remarkably similar in DNA to other species on this planet (98.5% of a chimpanzee DNA is identical to ours, and more than half of a chicken's DNA). If you want to look at the actual genome codes of a certain species (including our own), you can easily download them from the website www.ensembl.org. You'll find genomes of anything from a human to a zebrafish.

So, how much can our genes tell us about our well-being in life? I would like to invite you to try a little thought experiment to see what you think before I tell you the scientific consensus. Imagine three categories that affect your well-being, and you can divide 100 percentage points over the three categories to represent the level of influence each has over who and what you are. Here are the three categories, how would you divide the 100 points?

- + The DNA you have inherited from your parents.
- + The circumstances you experience in life.
- + The intentional activity you engage in (e.g. active choices in life).

In our workshops, I have seen everything from 100% DNA to 100% intentional activity, and people go to great lengths to have their views supported. I have seen people angrily change the numbers on my flip chart when I left for a toilet break, and I have been invited for beers at the bar to explain the numbers again and again. People clearly realise the relevance of the question, and often cite personal stories ('I have a

brother who is depressed, because it runs in the family’, or, ‘I got out of a depression when I started meditating, so it’s definitely intentional activity that matters most’) to support their views. Most people seem to care a lot about the question because, I think, they relate it directly to the notion of personal change in their own lives (‘Can I change?’, ‘Can my husband change?’).

So, what is the scientific consensus when it comes to DNA and our subjective well-being? Before I answer that question, it’s worth taking a look at what other estimated heritability¹⁵ scores scientists have discovered before.¹⁶ The numbers below are correlations, ranging from 0.00, where there is no apparent connection between two variables, to 1.00, where the two variables seem to be completely connected. Note that a high correlation doesn’t say anything about causality,¹⁷ rather it gives an insight into how well two variables fluctuate together.

As you can see from the table below, there seems to be a moderate to strong genetic component to the variation in traits. The more physical a characteristic becomes (e.g. fingerprint ridge count), the stronger the correlation usually is. When the characteristic is more on the ‘mental’ plane, the correlations are usually weaker, but still exist. Intelligence is an interesting exception here, where the correlation is weak when we are young, but becomes stronger when we grow older and is more likely to resemble the intelligence of our parents.

Bodily characteristics	Fingerprint ridge count	R = 0.97
	Height	R = 0.86
	Weight	R = 0.73
Personality traits (Big Five¹⁸)	Extraversion	R = 0.54
	Agreeableness	R = 0.42
	Conscientiousness	R = 0.49
	Neuroticism	R = 0.48
	Openness to experience	R = 0.57

Intelligence	Age 5	R = 0.22
	Age 10	R = 0.54
	Age 18	R = 0.82
	Age 50	R = 0.85
Psychiatric illnesses	Schizophrenia	R = 0.80
	Major depression	R = 0.37
	Panic disorder	R = 0.30–0.40
	Alcoholism	R = 0.50–0.60

Table 4: Correlations between selected characteristics and DNA coding

By now, it should not come as a surprise that our subjective state of mind, our well-being, is also partly determined by our genes. Research estimates that our well-being is determined for as much as 50% by our genes.¹⁹ Based on our collective set of genes, we each seem to have our own baseline when it comes to feeling well. Researchers call this our *set point*. The set point is the part of happiness that we can't really influence, it is our normal state that we return to when external influences, or our own actions, don't exert a large influence on our happiness.

People can have different set points: some people are naturally very happy, others are less happy. However, the set point should not lead to determinism, our moods fluctuate over time,²⁰ and certainly not all of the variations in them come from our genetic inheritance. In reality then, our set point merely defines a range that's likely for us. This range can be small with some people, who we'd call emotionally stable, or can be wide, in the case of bipolar disorders, for example. All in all, the genetic component that contributes to our subjective well-being is currently seen as difficult to influence.²¹ Some examples of longitudinal studies on our resilience when it comes to happiness are pictured below, showing that some huge life events normalise relatively quickly over time (like the birth of a child and marriage), but that there are also exceptions to the rule, like getting a divorce (while not getting remarried) and losing a job (and staying jobless).²²

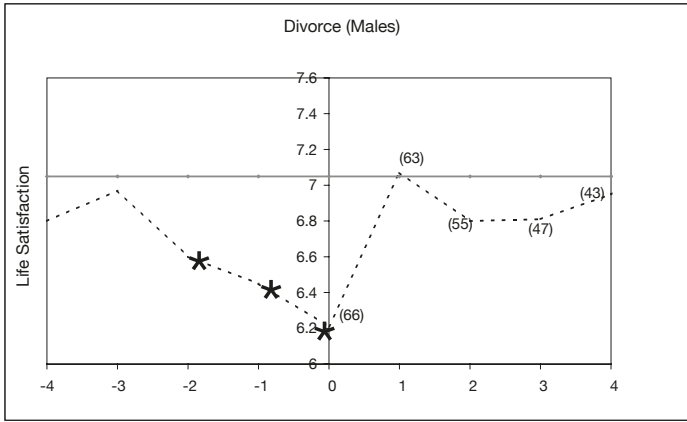
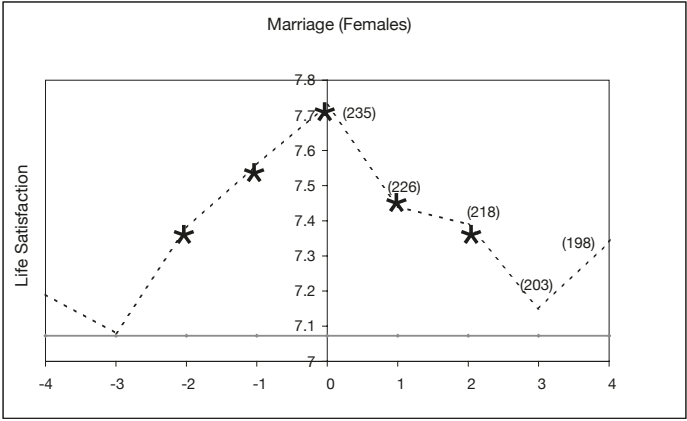
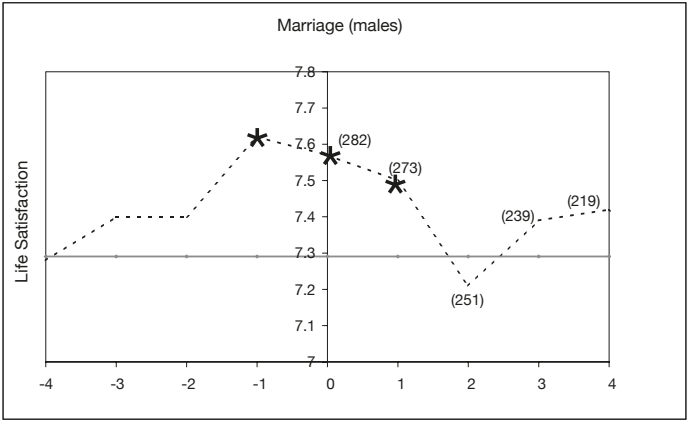


Figure 11 Variations in life satisfaction scores for major life events

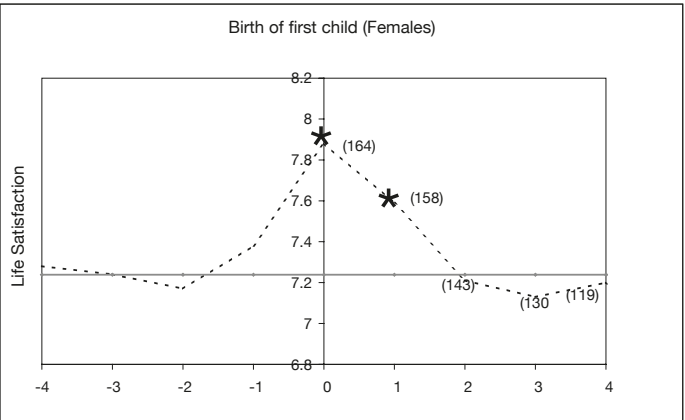
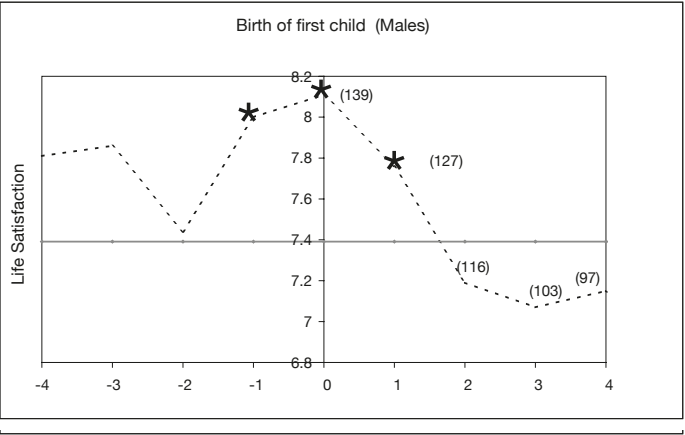
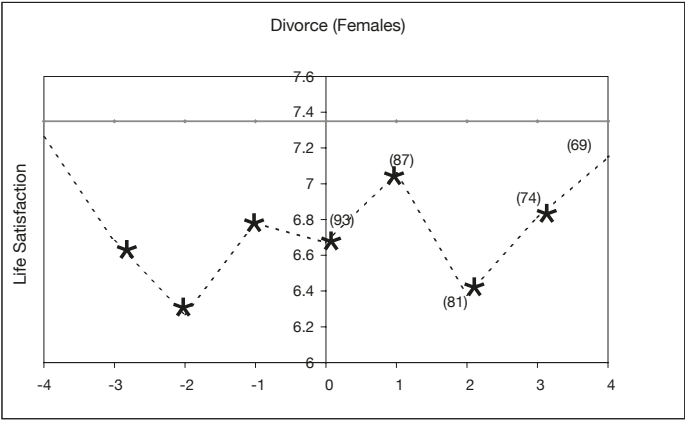


Figure 11 (cont.) Variations in life satisfaction scores for major life events

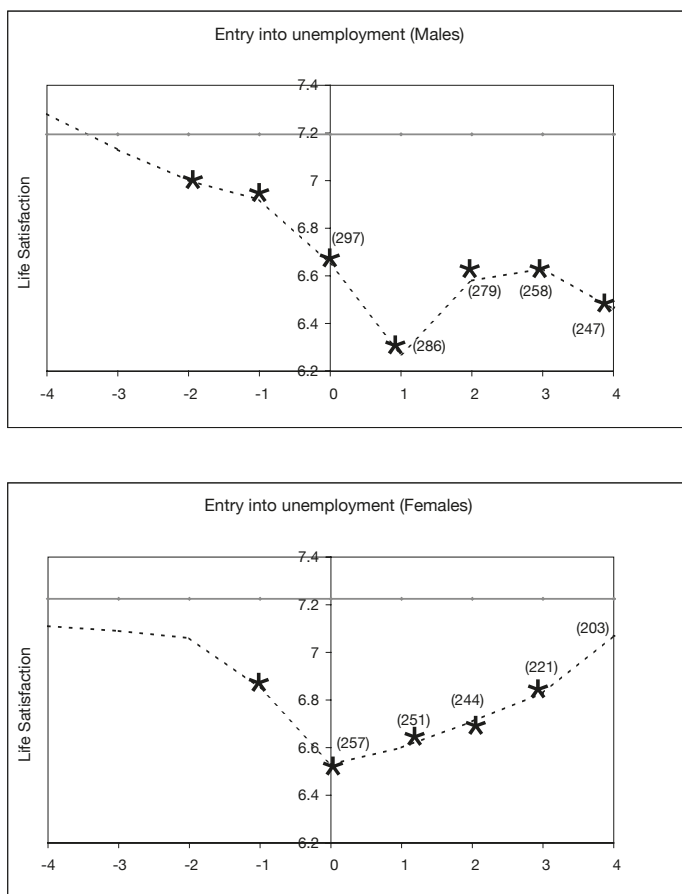


Figure 11 (cont.) Variations in life satisfaction scores for major life events

Genes partly determine who we are, but to understand the full complexity of their influence we need to look one step ahead. Although genes contribute to many psychological aspects in life, we cannot say with any amount of certainty that they actually *determine* the way we feel. Having a certain gene, a gene linked to depression for example, does not necessarily mean that you will become depressed. The reason for this lies in the way our genes express themselves throughout our lives, called gene expression.

Let's use this example of the so-called 'depression gene'. It is one of the most famous genes in science nowadays, and is also known as 5-HTT-

LPR.²³ This gene is known to code for the production of 5-HTT, which is used for serotonin transport in our brain. Serotonin is an important substance that makes us feel well. In fact, it is exactly that substance that some of the modern antidepressants (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, also known as SSRIs) target. Their aim, as the name suggests,

EXPERIENCE

Teaching genetics to future psychologists

When I had just started my company in 2012, there were some requests to teach these concepts to psychology students. One of those talks was about genes. In the talk, I explained to the students that our well-being is influenced by three main factors (our DNA, the circumstances we live in and the intentional activity we engage in²⁵). I wrote down the factors on the chalkboard, and asked them to estimate how much of the variance was explained by each factor.

The room was silent for a long time until one student raised his hand and said: 'Sir, this is THE question, isn't it?' I responded that it could well be the case, especially for those who aspire to be psychologists, and I asked him what he believed. He responded that he believed 90% would be attributed to DNA since he had read about so many heritability scores and they always seemed high. I asked the group if others believed the same, and many raised their hands.

I thanked them for their honesty, and made a joke out of it (telling them to study something else if they didn't think behaviour change was partly in our own hands). Afterwards, I explained that the scientific consensus points towards a 50% (DNA), 10% (circumstances), 40% (intentional activity) ratio. This means that genetic influences are indeed important, but there's ample room to increase your levels of well-being through the active choices we make in life.

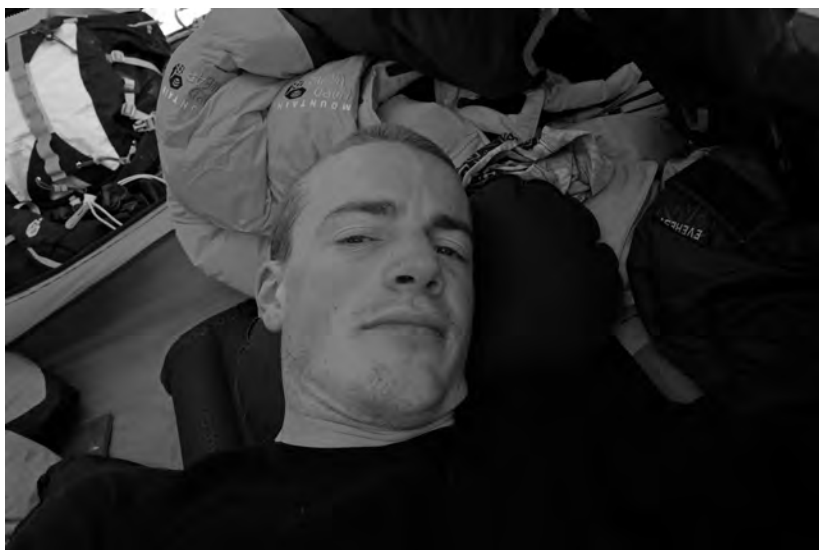


Figure 12 In the moment, happiness can clearly be influenced by external factors (Rens with altitude sickness in a tent on Aconcagua, 6962m, Argentina)



Figure 13 Instant moments of beauty can, in the moment, create instant sparks of happiness (Rens on the summit of Aconcagua, after 2.5 weeks of climbing and overcoming altitude sickness)

is to inhibit the reuptake of serotonin, making it stay between cells longer instead of re-entering them.

When it comes to this gene's role in causing depression, however, media reports tend to strongly oversimplify the situation. First of all, it's important to know that the presence of the gene does not accurately predict if someone will actually become depressed. This is because the expression of the gene is partly dependent on the specific external circumstances that a person faces. In the case of 5HTTLPR, it may become active after a traumatic experience (e.g. losing a loved one, losing a job, experiencing a car crash). Another reason why the story is more complicated is that researchers almost never find a single gene effect; genetic effects usually depend on a multitude of genes, which in turn may also influence each other. A final argument against oversimplification is the following: while 5-HTTLPR may indeed influence levels of serotonin in the brain, and serotonin is linked to depression, it's not the only brain chemical that is important. Other substances, such as dopamine, oxytocin and endorphin, can also affect how we feel.²⁴

So, while it may be statistically true that having the 5-HTTLPR gene increases your risk of developing depression in life, it is by no means a certainty.

2.3

CIRCUMSTANCES: EXTERNAL REASONS FOR OUR (UN)HAPPINESS

You already know that money and material wealth have a limited impact on our well-being.²⁶ But what about the other external factors besides money? What about physical attractiveness, for example? Or marriage?

In the workshops we organise, we ask these questions to participants. I must say this is a bit of a dirty psychologists' trick since we know

that people are quite bad at predicting what will make them happy.²⁷ The process is called ‘affective forecasting’ by psychologists. We find that people fail to accurately predict their future happiness because of a number of cognitive biases (a cognitive bias is essentially a fault in our normal information processing that we’re unaware of). A famous example was demonstrated by Daniel Gilbert in his TED Talk²⁸ where he showed that people predict themselves to be much happier after winning the lottery than they would be in reality. The underlying cognitive bias here is called the ‘focusing illusion’, in which people overestimate the relevance of a particular variable when you help them focus on that variable first.²⁹ Another famous example came when researchers asked students who were to be randomly assigned to a desirable or undesirable dormitory, to predict their own future happiness levels. The students collectively believed the particular dormitory would affect their happiness levels significantly, but later measurements found that both groups were equally happy afterwards.³⁰ Psychologists would call this bias either ‘impact bias’ (overestimating the impact of an event in duration or intensity) or ‘immune neglect’ (underestimating one’s own resilience).

Most people in our workshops believe circumstances are powerful predictors of how they feel. And, in the moment, they might well be right. Over time, however, people are less influenced by circumstances than they think. Statistically, around 10% of our well-being is explained by the circumstances we face. To explain, take the case of a soldier who experiences a traumatic event. We know that experiencing such an event doesn’t necessarily mean that this person will become less happy in the future. Although some soldiers can suffer from long-term post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), others grow stronger from their experience and, in the end, experience post-traumatic growth (PTG).³¹ In fact, the US Army uses an extensive positive psychology programme, the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness programme, which targets exactly this. There’s no denying that bad things happen, but it’s how we deal with them that makes all the difference.

Aren't there things that significantly affect our lives in the long run? Of course there are. Although most of the things that happen to us don't have long-term (more than two years) effects, but some things do. The latter could include losing a job and not getting another, the death of a spouse, or physical disabilities, especially when it directly affects the things you love (e.g. a football player losing one of his legs in a car accident).³² There is also news on the plus side: marriage seems to be something that positively affects our long-term levels of well-being.³³ Sadly enough, most studies in this field search for long-term negative deviance.

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

The Hedonic Treadmill

Our adaptation to either positive or negative circumstances in life is called 'hedonic adaptation'. It is also known as the 'hedonic treadmill', signifying a treadmill we're running on in search of happiness while actually staying in the same place. The famous study that Daniel Gilbert mentions in his TED Talk was done by Brickman and Campbell³⁵ who interviewed 22 lottery winners and 29 people who had become paralysed. The scientists wanted to determine how their situation changed their happiness. They found that, although both groups suffered from initial increases (lottery winners) or decreases in happiness (paraplegics), both groups were as happy as they were before the event.

Hedonic adaptation means that we're resilient and relatively stable, regardless of what happens to us. We're an extremely flexible species, able to deal with much of what comes our way. Biologists believe this to be important for survival; being happy all the time wouldn't necessarily make us more likely to survive. Survival depends, for a large part, on estimating risks, being aware of what will hurt us and avoiding it.

A final note on the nature of upbringing. In workshops, I'm often asked if upbringing plays a big part in a person's (un)happiness. The reason for this question is obvious: in the past, most psychologists have stressed that childhood experiences were a crucial explanatory factor for much of our psychology. The only study I know in this area is quite an optimistic one.³⁴ Researchers studied if adult life satisfaction could be predicted by childhood experiences and found that no more than 2% of the variation in life satisfaction (checked at ages 33, 42, 46 and 50) could be predicted by characteristics present at the time of birth (which included economic status and parental education). When they included extensive controls for ages 7, 11 and 16 — including a wide range of child-specific traits and family characteristics — the predictive power increased only to 7%. The results imply that we all have a good chance to live a satisfied life, and that those chances are more equal than most people believe.

2.4

INTENTIONAL ACTIVITY: THE 40% THAT YOU CAN INFLUENCE

You may have noticed that since 50% of who we are is explained by genetic factors and 10% by circumstances there is still a part of the model missing. This is the good news part, the part we can voluntarily control. Scientists call this *intentional activity*. Intentional activity consists of actions that we choose to do ourselves, actions that make us happier, or less happy, in life.

When you look back at the beginning of this chapter, intentional activities are also what most people mention when you ask them what truly makes them happy. Activities like spending time with loved ones, painting, exercising and meditating, are all things that we can influence. We have the power to implement those things in our lives, if we choose to. It seems most people intuitively realise that they are, at least partly, in charge. Our well-being can definitely be influenced by the things we choose to do.



Figure 14 The Happiness Formula: 50-10-40

Summarising this last chapter in one simple illustration leads us to figure 14.

I'd like to share a final insight into the 40% since I know you might be disappointed by the number. This is common because the figure is lower than the genetic component (50%), but that is not a relevant comparison in this case. Imagine the following: if your genes were to cause your so-called set point to be a 7.5 out of 10,³⁶ meaning that in general you feel quite good, what would 40% control over this experience do to you? It would be enough to move the needle up quite a bit (to more than 9) or down (to a 5), more than enough to affect the way you experience life for the better, or worse. We don't need 100% control over our well-being to feel good — it's probably good that we don't — and 40% is more than enough control to affect our, and others', lives.

The rest of this book, then, is about intentional activity. It will focus specifically on the scientifically proven activities that work well for people. In the next chapter, I will focus on personal well-being first, since this will provide you with basic building blocks and necessary insights for the later chapters, which will focus on flourishing organisations. But first, let's take a brief look at what can block us from being happier today.

2.5

HAPPINESS BLOCKERS: HOW WE SABOTAGE OUR OWN HAPPINESS

So far, you have seen that the notion of 'happiness' has been quite thoroughly researched. We have a multitude of working definitions, are well aware of how well we are doing per country, and know how much

DEEPEN YOUR INSIGHT

Idealism v. realism

Idealism or realism, which mind-set is the right choice if you want to be happy? Most people start off idealistic, with great dreams, but consider themselves more of a realist as time progresses. Mike Tyson, the famous boxer, put it well when he said, 'Everybody has a plan, until they get punched in the face.' Sometimes, therefore, people even consider their road to realism as a sign of wisdom, where the realist is seen as more understanding of how life really works. In practice, the sad fact is that many idealists become realists because of the disappointments they experience, not because it's more functional.

I personally believe idealists can be the best realists ever. Consider a famous idealist, Marva Collins, a teacher who worked with children labelled as learning disabled. She strongly believed in the potential of the children she taught and made it her life's mission to help those children. Her strength was showing children that they mattered and that they were appreciated. Consider, for example, the method she used to punish children when it was needed: writing down 'why they're too beautiful to show this behaviour'.

So, Marva Collins was definitely an idealist, but did that make her less realistic? I don't think so. She saw the potential in children where others didn't, and she was often right.

we can change our experienced levels of happiness through the right practices. Still, we are not much happier than we were in the past — if at all.³⁷ Why is that?

First, let's look at our current reality. Are our lives so much better now than in the past? In terms of lifespan, amounts of clean water, money earned, available calories for consumption, lumen-hours to enjoy (thanks to electric light), ease of communication and ease of travelling, we have never had it so good.³⁸ Since 1800, the population of the world has multiplied six times,³⁹ yet average life expectancy has more than doubled, and real income has risen more than nine times. Even when you consider just the last 50 years, circumstances have become much better for many of us: the average person earned three times as much, gained a full one-third longer in life expectancy and saw far fewer children die.⁴⁰ According to the UN, poverty has been reduced more in the last 50 years than in the previous 500. The most fundamental basic needs — food, clothing, fuel and shelter — have become much more affordable for us. Where the average American citizen spent 76 out of every 100 dollars on these essentials in the past, he spends only 37 today (leaving the rest for other activities).⁴¹

When we're building organisations, value creation goes quicker now than ever before, with young companies generating value faster than ever before.⁴² When it comes to innovation — where the exchange of information is one of the main drivers — what better time and place could there be to spread ideas than our current, hyper-connected planet, where already billions of us are on the Internet⁴³ and where we produce more data in ten minutes than our ancestors did from the beginning of time till 2003.⁴⁴ As a bonus, with such super connectivity, solving a problem locally can mean solving a problem globally as it has become much easier to scale good concepts to other regions of the world.

When it comes to violence, a similar story unfolds; our history is full of violence, but, as a race, we're becoming more peaceful every day.⁴⁵ Where slavery used to be common practice, it is now outlawed every-

where. Other factors of violence, like crime, rape, genocide, death penalties and torture, are declining in most parts of the world. So, to me, the 21st century seems a magnificent time to be alive. It provides us with more safety, a better quality of life, and more opportunities than ever before in human history. It is indeed a world of abundance, and about to get even better.

Given these numbers, it's a surprise our happiness levels are not skyrocketing. If we'd only be rational about the facts, we'd realise everything is steadily getting better for most of us. But in our daily lives we often fail to realise this. In fact, many of us seem to believe the opposite. The reason lies in how we're wired, that we're more prone to view things pessimistically. We rely mostly on mental shortcuts to be effective in life. And many of these mental shortcuts are more effective at making us see dangers rather than the good things. We're essentially set up to be pessimists. A famous example is how we instinctively care more about preventing losses than gaining new things, called the *loss aversion bias*.^{46, 47} Loss aversion makes us more aware of, and more affected by, bad news (which experts in the media know well; good news is no news). People simply regret a loss more than they value a similar gain. It is exactly this habit that often keeps people where they are, not willing to move even though life could be better elsewhere. Matt Ridley explains loss aversion in a single sentence: 'We might be gloomy because gloomy people managed to avoid getting eaten by lions in the Pleistocene.'

A second bias that is known to lead to people interpreting the world in a more negative way than is necessary is the *negativity bias*:^{48, 49} the tendency to give more weight to negative information and experiences than to positive ones. We tend to give negative experiences more value when it comes to our attention (e.g. we tend to look longer at negative than positive pictures),⁵⁰ what we remember (e.g. people forget positive experiences more often than negative experiences)⁵¹ and what information we tend to use to make decisions (e.g. we're more motivated to vote against a political candidate because of negative information than to vote in favour because of positive information).⁵²

Scientists in this field often use a paradox to explain what they mean: *a dishonest person can sometimes act honestly while still being considered to be predominantly dishonest. But when, on the other hand, an honest person does something dishonest, he will likely be reclassified as a dishonest person.*

A third, well known bias that can strengthen the initial two biases mentioned above is the *confirmation bias*,⁵³ where people essentially interpret information to fit with their pre-existing mental schemas. It can lead people who already believe the world to be a terrible place to miss new information, and the effect tends to be stronger for emotionally charged issues, or deeply entrenched beliefs. This bias, therefore, seems to play a large role in sustaining political beliefs, financial systems and even paranormal explanations. This bias is, again, caused by the limits of our mental bandwidth, where processing all the new facts of a day would be too much for the brain. The upside is speed and efficiency, but the downside can be great when the initial worldview is more negative.

Another classic mental heuristic, or bias, that can backfire when it comes to happiness is the *focusing illusion*.⁵⁴ This is where we tend to focus on one central element that stands out for us but forget that there are more variables at play. Money is a great example, a contributing factor to our happiness that people tend to overestimate in terms of impact when they're asked to focus on it directly. In the moment, we tend to miss all the other variables that affect how we experience happiness in our lives. Peter Diamandis, in his book *Abundance: The Future Is Better Than You Think* (2012), relates an anecdote about London in the nineteenth century, which was becoming uninhabitable because of the accumulation of horse manure. People were panicked and couldn't see a solution. What they didn't know was that the car was coming, which would solve the horse manure problem (but brought new problems with it, like air pollution).

So, what are we to do? We are living on a beautiful planet, where life is getting better for most of us all the time, but we are wired to overlook

those facts. Throughout this book, I would love to encourage you to be more aware of — and possibly challenge — your own thinking. In my view, it is precisely because there is still suffering, pain and scarcity in the world that optimism is morally mandatory.

3

HOW TO FLOURISH

3.1

HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER

To flourish in life — living with the feeling that life is rewarding and meaningful¹ — is arguably the most important pursuit in our life. To start working consciously on your happiness levels is therefore one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself. In my experience, with myself and with clients, I can tell you that flourishing involves being really honest with yourself, having deep and real conversations with your loved ones, and experimenting with experiences that may be new to you. All these things can be challenging, but I sincerely hope you will see the value of them once you start.

In this chapter, I propose a 3-step process in order to systematically work on your own happiness:

1. **Test yourself first.** You can do this for free on our website: www.purposeplus.co. The goal is to find the right areas for you to focus on. If you just want to take one survey, my suggestion would be the PERMA Profiler. For every technique mentioned in the book, I have included the relevant PERMA dimensions under the title (Remember: PERMA = **P**ositive emotions, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning and **A**ccomplishment).
2. **Experiment.** There is at least one exercise per technique. All of the techniques and underlying exercises mentioned in this book are backed by research that demonstrates their effectiveness.² Some techniques may seem obvious to you, others may seem strange or

even ineffective. Nonetheless, I encourage you to try, since that's the only way to find out.

3. **Construct personal rituals.** Long-term impact is attained by creating the right habits. Therefore, once you find a useful technique, the next step is to incorporate it into your daily rituals.

Technique 1: Exercise HIT



When Tal Ben-Shahar (former teacher of Harvard's most popular course: the happiness course), was asked at a conference for his single, best tip to become happier. He responded with the following: 'If you ask me to give you one single tip, I'd say that it should be *exercise*.' Most people in the room found this a surprising answer from a psychologist, but I believe Tal was right. I have worked years as a martial arts instructor and personal trainer, and have seen first-hand what exercise can mean to people. There is simply no other, single technique, with as much benefit for the body and mind.

Exercise, whether it's strength training in the gym, running outside, or playing a soccer match with friends, has many proven benefits.³ Obviously, exercise can help us build muscle and lose fat tissue. It also helps us live longer, with a recent estimate from a study with more than 650,000 participants suggesting that it can add as much as 3.4 more years to life when you exercise regularly after the age of 40.⁴ Regularly, in this study, means 5 times a week for at least 30 minutes. This is not surprising when you consider that regular exercise lowers the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and undesirable blood lipid patterns, and it also seems to protect against certain forms of cancer, like colon and breast cancer.⁵

Getting inactive people to be a bit more active in the US alone — where 42% of men and 50% of women don't meet the physical activity guidelines as advocated by the government⁶ — could cut medical costs in the country by \$70 billion every year⁷ (which is, ironically enough,

\$40 billion more than the estimated amount needed every year to solve world hunger: \$30 billion).⁸ What is less well-known, is that exercise also improves people's moods significantly, and reduces depression and anxiety.⁹ It also boosts self-esteem, and our total cognitive functioning.¹⁰ Some research on the latter even suggests that exercise may play an important role in the development of new brain cells (called neurogenesis) in the hippocampus, an area of the brain that is heavily involved in forming new memories.¹¹ While scientists have believed for years that the formation of new brain cells was hardly possible, they now find exercise might be an important moderator of that process.

DEEPEN YOUR INSIGHT

How our memory works

An explanation of why exercise can be beneficial to making new memories might lie in the formation of new cells in the hippocampus, a structure deep in the brain of humans and other vertebrates.

To explain how important the hippocampus is for our functioning, most authors describe a famous patient who lost most of his hippocampus in a medical procedure meant to cure him of epilepsy. After the procedure, this patient, Henry Molaison, was essentially 'frozen in time'. He was no longer able to form new memories after the operation. Therefore, his life was filled with fascinating moments, such as just looking in the mirror, every day. Even when he was an older man (he lived until he was 82) he thought he was still 31, his age at the time of his operation. Many books¹⁵ have been written about Molaison.

Closer to home for most of us, it's also possible to see the effects of a damaged hippocampus. In Alzheimer's disease, for example, the hippocampus is one of the first brain regions to suffer – which leads to memory loss and disorientation.

Although this is preliminary research done on mice, studies in humans show a similar pattern: children who exercise more in school show significantly better brain functioning and test performances than those who do not exercise,¹² and other research shows that exercise can make us smarter.¹³ Other benefits of exercise include deeper relaxation and better sleep, and a better sex life.¹⁴

Exercise comes in many forms, and you may want some more practical tips on how to get the full benefit from it. Here are the key insights we work with:

- + High intensity training (HIT) sessions for short periods of 30–45 minutes are important to build energy. They are ideally done up to 3 times a week in, for example, a so-called ‘split schedule’, where one training is focused on legs and stomach, and another on the remaining muscle groups like chest, arms and upper back. Such sessions may spark the production of dopamine,¹⁶ and certainly other chemicals like epinephrine (adrenaline) and endorphins in the body and brain,¹⁷ which lead to higher levels of energy, focus and a reduced sensation of pain. Some of the effects are only visible when the exercise level reaches a certain threshold (e.g. above 70% of your maximum heart rate, which you can theoretically find by subtracting your age from 220, although it may be slightly different in reality). Examples of HIT workouts include strength training, circuit training, 400 metre sprint workouts, soccer matches, squash, etc.
- + Longer workouts, focused on cardiovascular fitness, lasting 45–90 minutes, are important to feel fulfilled and ‘in flow’. This probably happens because they lead to the production of serotonin¹⁸ and endorphin.¹⁹ Notice that, for this to occur, the balance between intensity and duration is important; longer exercise seems to spark a stronger chemical response, but so does intensity, and we can’t choose both at the same time. The best option therefore is to experiment with both forms (long duration with low intensity, or a shorter duration with higher intensity), and choose the one you prefer.
- + Combine both workout styles for the best long-term mental benefits, leading to a total of at least three exercise sessions a week. And

I would recommend making at least one of them a high intensity training session.

If three times a week sounds like too much to you, remember this: most of the mental benefits of exercise already take place when you do the short exercise of roughly 30 minutes,²⁰ so that may well be sufficient for your goal of improving well-being.

Here is the main way to get exercise into your routine:

Design a Workout Ritual. When it comes to long-term health benefits, it all comes down to the habits we cultivate over time. Exercising regularly may well be the most powerful contributor to long-term health. The best way to get started is to focus on designing an exercise ritual that works well for you. Whether it's short or long is less important, focus on creating the habit first. Here are things to help you design your ritual:

- + Firstly, make sure you set goals that you truly, intrinsically, care about. Do this for the long term (e.g. lose 5kg in 3 months, or climb Mount Everest). It can seriously help your motivation if the goal is something that you truly value.
- + Break your goal down into parts. A good way to do this is by asking 'what do I need to get there'. If you have chosen the right goal, chances are that you will end up with the best to-do list ever.²¹
- + Break your goals down even further to a daily level. Think about how to reward yourself after you finish your workout. I have included a personal reflection box on how to celebrate on a daily level.
- + If possible, and if you want, find at least one friend to join you in the process. People often report that exercise is easier when they do it together.
- + Don't focus on perfection. Good can be better than perfect. Focus on ritualising your new behaviour first — not on how long each session is exactly — and don't judge yourself when you miss a workout, which you likely will many times.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

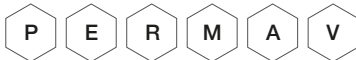
Celebrating new behaviour

Real behaviour change happens when we ritualise new behaviour. We become fit when we exercise again, and again, and again, and can become happier in life when we systematically improve on one or more of the PERMA dimensions.

In order to ritualise new behaviour, like exercising three times a week, it's important to find rituals that energise and reward you when you do them. In order to help you come up with an energising exercise ritual, here are three questions:

- + How do you usually feel when you've finished exercising?
Please describe this in as much detail as you can.
- + What do you love to do most when you've finished exercising?
Think of moments where you enjoyed your time after a workout.
- + Given the two answers above: how could you ideally reward yourself after exercising? Design a ritual that's both healthy and rewarding for yourself.

Technique 2: Get Some Real Rest



A good night's sleep is the hidden driver behind much of our mental functioning: it is heavily involved in the formation of new memories,²² how well we learn,²³ our subjective well-being²⁴ and our performance.²⁵ Sleep deprivation affects many parts of life, often without the sleep-deprived person realising it. Today, however, many people suffer from sleep deprivation, with nearly 30% of Americans sleeping less than 6 hours per night.²⁶ This is a serious problem since we know that we need more: school-aged children need at least 10 hours of sleep daily, teenagers 8–10 hours, and adults 7–9 hours on average.²⁷ Sleep deprivation has also been shown to be a costly matter for

organisations, with a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* estimating lost productivity costs for an employee with insomnia to be \$3,156 per year, and \$2,500 per year for employees with less severe sleep problems.²⁸ A recent study by Nobel Prize-winning psychologist, Daniel Kahneman, found that just getting one more hour of sleep per night might have a greater effect on happiness than a \$60,000 raise.²⁹

So, what exactly happens when we sleep? Researchers don't have definitive answers here, but we have some clues as to what might be happening. First of all, we know by now that we move through specific phases in our sleep, and each phase has a different function.

Each sleep cycle is roughly 90 minutes long, containing a 20–30 minute bout of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which is characterised by a lack of muscle activity, and therefore little or no other movement. The combination of REM and non-REM phases of sleep seems to be important for our learning and memory formation,³⁰ where the deeper phases of our sleep (non-REM) seem to be most important for our physical,

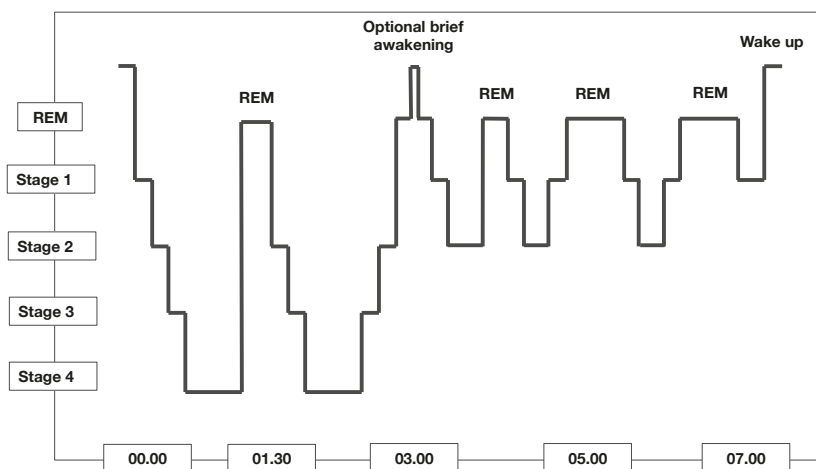


Figure 15 The anatomy of a healthy night shows different phases, with crucial deep phases of sleep (3 and 4) for physical recovery

motor skills development,³¹ and the lighter REM phases for our declarative memory (memories that can be consciously recalled, such as facts and knowledge).³² The deep, non-REM phases of our sleep, phase 3 and 4 in the figure above, are phases where we are completely relaxed, our heart rate drops and body temperature decreases slightly. In this phase, the body produces growth hormone, a crucial hormone for tissue and muscle growth,³³ and increases parasympathetic neural activity, the ‘rest and digest’ system of our bodies. The deep sleep phase therefore seems to be related to physical recovery.³⁴ For all of us, but especially for the (corporate) athletes among us, these phases cannot be missed. Especially when we are stressed, or learning a lot, sleep is a crucial element for our success and well-being.

Sleep, to summarise it briefly, is crucial for mental and physical recovery. It is directly, and powerfully, related to our performance and well-being — and we should value it for what it’s worth. So, although some companies advertise with slogans like ‘sleep is overrated’,³⁵ they’re wrong. Coffee, for example, may indeed help to sharpen you during the day, but sleep has way more benefits that coffee can’t offer.

If you have trouble getting the right amount of sleep for some reason, here is the best way to approach it. It is similar to the way to approach exercise; again, the focus is on ritualising behaviour over time.

1. *Design a Relaxation Ritual.* Relaxation rituals are highly personal and depend on how well you have trained your mind to adhere to them. The main questions for the ritual are: what will you start doing, and when? And, what will you stop doing, and when? The best way to design a ritual is to test it for a couple of nights in a row (1–10 rating of success) and adapt when necessary. Here are some elements to include in your ritual:
 - + Switch off the screens around you and dim the light. Your brain reacts to low levels of light by producing the hormones we need to fall asleep.
 - + Consume foods rich in tryptophan, magnesium and/or melatonin one hour before sleeping. These substances are known to deepen your sleep,³⁶ by either relaxing your muscles more, or by stimulating

the melatonin secretion in your brain. Examples include bananas, cherries, hot milk with honey, or hazelnuts. You can also consume magnesium in a 200–400 mg tablet form 30 minutes before you go to bed. Make sure you get a form of magnesium that your body can work with, like the citrate version (rather than an oxide version, for example). Alcohol (due to increased liver activity), chocolate (contains caffeine) and heavy protein rich meals are not ideal before you go to sleep.

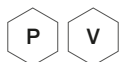
- + Exercise during the day. By being more active during the day, it becomes easier for your body and mind to relax at night. Remember, however, that your body produces epinephrine when you exercise and it takes about 2.5 hours to get this out of your system. So make sure you stop your exercise routine at least 2.5 hours before you plan to sleep.
- + Practise relaxation techniques, like *ratio breathing*.³⁷ We can learn to have control over our tension levels, and I have seen this work very well with many world-class athletes. Below is a technique you can use to practise this:



Figure 16 Workshop with Annelie Pompe, one of the world's best freedivers (record: 126 metres with one breath), where participants practice relaxation techniques

- Sit down, or lie down if you are already in bed, and make sure you are comfortable.
- Focus on the sensation of the breath entering the body for a couple of breaths. Just feel the air entering your body, and leaving it again.
- Start breathing in through your nose, out through your mouth, with a 3:3 ratio. This means 3 seconds in, and 3 seconds out.
- When this can be done comfortably, prolong the outward breath to a 3:6 ratio (3 seconds in, 6 seconds out).
- If you can continue comfortably, move to a 3:9 ratio.
- If this is still comfortable, move to 3:12.
- + Remove mobile phones and gadgets from your bedroom. Since our brain activity is strongly influenced by our habits, it's wise to keep your mobile phone — and ideally other distractors — away from your bedroom. Keep it clean.

Technique 3: Eat Well



The old adage tells us that ‘we are what we eat’. This is correct in the sense that what we eat contributes a great deal to how we feel. Here are 5 crucial steps to improve your overall energy level and health:^{38, 39, 40}

1. **Eat smaller meals every 3 hours instead of 3 large meals a day.**
Eating three large meals gives you three, large, glucose peaks per day. This also means there are times when glucose levels will be low, which often makes people grab an extra cup of coffee or snack in order to stay energised. The trick is to eat more regularly, every three hours, where every meal is a complete meal (fatty acids, protein and carbohydrates).
2. **Eat natural food.** If you don't recognise where your food has come from then don't eat it. Overly-processed foods (white sugars, processed meats, etc.) are usually less healthy, contain preservatives and often lack fibre.
3. **Eat fatty fish at least twice a week.** The types of fish that are good to consume are salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines and herring. They

contain omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for effective communication between nerve cells and cardiovascular functioning. There is also some early research showing that fish oil can improve mood and alleviate depression.⁴¹

4. **Eat more fibre.** Fibre is one of the ‘forgotten foods’, and it’s of prime importance to your digestive system.⁴² Fibre is essentially a type of carbohydrate the body can’t digest. It helps to regulate the body’s use of sugar, and regular intake of fibre reduces the risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. In fact, in a Harvard study of 40,000 men, high total dietary fibre intake was linked to a 40% lower risk of coronary heart disease,⁴³ and a recent Harvard study found similar results for women.⁴⁴ Most natural foods contain a lot of fibre (vegetables, whole grain foods, seeds, beans, green leaves, peas, etc.), but most processed foods do not. Personally, I love to add wheatgrass or chia seeds, both rich in fibre, to my shake in the morning. Another great idea is to put a handful of flax seed in your shake or yoghurt at breakfast.
5. **Avoid soft drinks.** Soft drinks are sugar bombs, and can contain up to 30 grams of sugar per glass. They contain empty calories and are a prime reason for the current trend in obesity. Avoid them.
6. **Eat mindfully.** We know that overeating is unhealthy, and restricting our calorie intake may well lead to a longer life (at least, this seems the case for mice⁴⁵ and monkeys).⁴⁶ We often overeat simply because we are not mindful enough when we eat, and don’t notice when we’re stuffing ourselves. So the tip is quite simple: eat slower, take some breaks during the meal, and you’ll notice when you’re satisfied sooner.

To help you remember these rules, below is a picture of the Harvard Food Pyramid. In the past, food pyramids had carbohydrates (rice, grains, bread, etc.) at the bottom, this has been replaced by fruits, vegetables, healthy oils and carbohydrates in equal parts. There is also room for nuts, and proteins from fish and poultry one level up. Although dairy products have been controversial, they have been included again. The upper red triangle are products that are *not* recommended: they include red meat,⁴⁷ which has recently been linked to cardiovascular



Figure 17 The Harvard Food Pyramid contains a lot of scientific consensus in a relatively simple graph

disease, cancer and overall mortality,⁴⁸ and overly-processed foods, like soft drinks and white bread.

Although the rules may seem relatively simple, don't underestimate the powerful effect they can have on your overall well-being. I've seen many people change completely by following them: with more energy, significant weight loss, less trouble with their diabetes, better concentration and higher levels of satisfaction with life.

To conclude this part, here are some extra tips to get your brain into great shape:

- + Eat dark chocolate twice a week. Dark chocolate, with 80% cacao or more, is a healthy snack. Cacao intake is linked to a number of health benefits, mainly of the cardiovascular system,⁴⁹ as it contains anti-oxidants. Cocoa, the product of treated cacao beans, is a stimulant because it contains theobromine. Cocoa is also rich in serotonin and L-tryptophan (a precursor for serotonin, that can be converted to serotonin in our body), and may therefore raise the

serotonin level in the brain, adding to the ‘feel good’ part of eating chocolate.⁵⁰ Next to eating chocolate, another way of taking cocoa is to add pure cacao to a shake, after a workout, for example.

- + Eat nuts as a snack. As well as being packed with protein and fibre, some of them also contain a healthy dose of omega-3 fatty acids and prevent heart attacks. Walnuts have most omega-3 fatty acids, peanuts (which technically are legumes) have a lot of vitamin B9 (folic acid). Cashews have a lot of magnesium.⁵¹
- + Eat broccoli regularly. Broccoli contains vitamin C, dietary fibre, vitamin K and choline. It seems to lose some of its anti-carcinogenic properties when it’s boiled, steaming or microwaving are better.⁵²
- + Pack your bananas, especially when you go for a workout. Bananas provide you with lots of potassium, fibre, magnesium and tryptophan, which, as stated above, is needed to produce serotonin, making you feel good and relaxed.

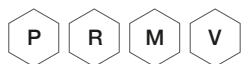
The best way to ensure behavioural change is, again, to build the advice into your daily routine. So here’s my challenge to you: can you design your own food rituals based on the information above?

Design a Healthy Week. In order to design a healthy week for yourself, it is important to think ahead to make sure you have the right ingredients at the right time. Therefore, in the chart below, decide on what you will eat on different days of the week. Most importantly, decide on what snacks you’ll take with you to deal with those low-glucose moments.

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>	<i>Sun</i>
Breakfast							
Snack							
Lunch							
Snack							
Dinner							

Once you have designed the ideal routine for the week, get the groceries for it right away. This ritual, where you think ahead and design a healthy week for yourself, is ideally done at the weekend.

Technique 4: Practise Gratitude



Cicero, the great Roman philosopher and orator, once said that gratitude was the master of all virtues. He believed many things to be important, but saw gratitude as the highest virtue. Why? Because gratitude helps us to feel well in many ways. It has therefore been a hot topic in positive psychology, with a recent US\$56 million research initiative aimed at gratitude, covering topics like the neuroscience behind gratitude and the role of gratitude in romantic love.⁵³ The recent buzz around gratitude has even led to online ‘gratitude challenges’, where you can learn to be a ‘gratitude warrior’ in 21 days,⁵⁴ and beautiful TED Talks, like the one by Louie Schwartzberg, simply called *Gratitude*.

Here are a few benefits of practising gratitude that you might not have realised before:^{55, 56}

- + Gratitude helps you to cope with stress.
- + Gratitude enhances accessibility to positive memories.
- + Gratitude builds social resources, like friendships and marriage.
- + Gratitude reduces toxic emotions from social comparisons.⁵⁷
- + Gratitude reduces materialistic strivings.
- + Gratitude leads to a stronger immune system and lower blood pressure.
- + Gratitude leads to decreased levels of depression.
- + Gratitude improves self-esteem.⁵⁸
- + Gratitude motivates moral behaviour.
- + Gratitude can lead to reduced feelings of loneliness.

There has also been a lot of research done on the value of being more positive in life. Studies have revealed that psychologists whose writings used a greater number of positive words lived an average of six to seven

years longer than colleagues who were more negative.⁵⁹ This study is remarkable, and there have been similar results with singers, where those who sang love songs with positive words lived an average of fourteen years longer than those that sang love songs with angry words,⁶⁰ and Catholic nuns, where the ones who wrote the most positive words in their diaries lived an average of twelve years longer than their less positive counterparts.⁶¹

Although the value of good things in life is well known, it's not always easy to get there. Studies show that we, as human beings, tend to react more strongly to negativity than positivity⁶² (explained in paragraph 2.5 as the negativity bias). As Roy Baumeister — one of my former university lecturers — wrote in his paper 'Bad Is Stronger than Good', we tend to focus more on what doesn't go well. We pay more attention to bad parenting, bad emotions and bad feedback than when things are working out just fine. One example, in hiring processes, is especially striking: we need 3.8 unfavourable bits of information to shift an initial positive decision to a rejection, whereas 8.8 favourable pieces of information are needed to shift an initial rejection towards an acceptance. Also, the effects of negative events take longer to wear off than the effects of positive events.

So, although many psychologists today agree with Cicero in the sense that many interventions that target well-being relate directly to the concept of gratitude and seeing the good things in life, it may require some practice from our side. Luckily, gratitude is a trainable concept and we can learn to become more grateful for what we have, and what we experience in life⁶³. Here are the best ways, with scientific backing, to train yourself in gratitude:

1. *Three Good Things Diary*.⁶⁴ Before you go to bed, write down the three best things that happened that day. Writing these brings them into your consciousness again and can help you see your day in a different light. This exercise, however small, can have a huge impact. It has also been shown to alleviate depression.
2. *Three Funny Moments Diary*.⁶⁵ This is variation on the first technique. In this variation, write down the three funniest things that

- happened to you during the day. Do this every day for a week.
3. *Gratitude Journal*.⁶⁶ If you like to write, use one night a week, a Sunday for example, to write about your week. What did you feel grateful for? How did that feel exactly? Objectivity is not important here; you can just write down how these things made you feel (and why, if you know that).
 4. *Gratitude Letter*. Write a letter to someone who helped you in the past, someone you have never properly thanked. That person could be a family member, a colleague or a good friend. In your letter, express clearly how you feel, and try to explain why you feel that way for this particular person.
 5. *Gratitude Call*. Once you have written a gratitude letter or short note to someone, a great way to share it with them is to give them a call and read it out loud. We started doing this technique in our workshops after we learned that people were often afraid to actually deliver the gratitude letters to their loved ones. They wrote the letters, but the message was never received. Although the technique is very direct, and there are many excuses not to do it (examples I've heard include: 'He/she is working now', 'The person I chose might think I'm crazy when I do this', and 'We never do this in my family'), I've only seen good things come from it. If you're one of those people who would feel comfortable doing this, or you already do it a lot, another challenge can be to pick a person with whom you don't have such a great relationship at the moment, to see if you can turn it around by making a conscious first move.
 6. *Gratitude Visit*.⁶⁷ A similar technique to the Gratitude Call, but this time you deliver the message in person. Again, you will need to do the Gratitude Letter exercise first (see Gratitude Letter). Either read it out loud to the person you've chosen, or have the person read it when you're there.
 7. *Daily Appreciation*. This is about expressing thanks and appreciation to those you love on a daily basis. Mark Twain once said, 'I can live two months on a good compliment', but he only told half the story. The giver of the compliment also benefits, and so does the bond between people. I've seen many great ways to implement this — even families with 'family member of the week signs' on

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Gratitude assessment

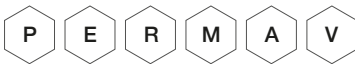
If you feel that practising gratitude is something you could benefit from, here's a challenge that got to me in the past. Michael McCullough, a professor at the University of Miami specialising in gratitude and forgiveness, developed a survey that can assess how grateful you are compared to other people. I found my survey results quite shocking when I first filled it in, realising I was in the lowest 5% of the population, not very grateful at all.

You can find the survey (called Gratitude) on our website www.purposeplus.co, it's free and will take you about 3 minutes to complete.

the door — but the essence is the underlying mind-set: consciously choosing daily to show appreciation for the people around you.

8. *Say Thanks*. If you find being thankful difficult (like I do), there's even an online tool built for you, called Thnx4.⁶⁸ This app will help you say thanks to people, and track your well-being over time as well. It allows sharing the 'Thnx' with other people.

Technique 5: Practise Mindfulness



Mindfulness meditation is one of the most powerful techniques to become happier in life, influencing all PERMA dimensions. The benefits of the techniques are well documented through hundreds of studies. The practice of meditation may help alleviate depression and anxiety,⁶⁹ strengthen your immune system, create a happier brain,⁷⁰ reduce stress, strengthen positive emotions and reduce emotional reactivity,⁷¹ and can even help couples to be more satisfied with their relationship.⁷² Mindfulness interventions have also been effective in schools, helping children become happier and control their ability to pay attention.⁷³ It

has also been tried and tested in a prison, where it reduced hostility and mood disturbance and improved self-esteem.⁷⁴

Mindfulness essentially entails an *accepting and non-judgemental focus* on whatever you experience. Although the practice of mindfulness, and related forms of meditation, may have a spiritual connotation for you, I recommend you look beyond the stigmas and just experience the technique for what it's worth. I have worked a lot with meditation in athletic and corporate teams and have seen it work well for many people as soon as they were ready to give it a try.

There are many techniques to practise being more mindful, and I recommend starting with the basics. Below, I have included the main meditation techniques to get started:

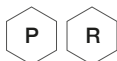
1. *Mindfulness Meditation.* Find a space where you can comfortably sit for at least 10 minutes. Make sure the temperature is comfortable and that you won't be disturbed. Sit either on a chair or on a meditation cushion and keep your back straight (if you sit on a chair, keep your feet flat on the floor with your knees at a 90 degree angle). Close your eyes and start to relax. Focus on the simple sensation of your breath for the first few minutes. Feel the breath coming in, feel your belly expanding and feel the breath leaving your body. Just become aware of this. After a while, once you feel relaxed and comfortable, start counting your outward breaths 1–10. If you lose focus, then start at 1 again. Combine relaxation with genuine interest in your experience, compassion for your mistakes. Start by meditating for 5 minutes, then slowly increase your practice to 10 minutes, 20 minutes, or even 30 minutes a day.
2. *Mindful Consumption.* This is a practice to become more mindful of what you are sensing, in this case: food. The classic practice is called the 'raisin exercise', in which you eat a raisin as slowly as you can in order to fully indulge in all the sensations this brings. Start by exploring the raisin like a scientist (notice the ridges, the stem, the moisture that's inside, etc.). Then move on to smelling it. Then slowly progress to eating the raisin. Take at least 5 minutes to really enjoy the raisin. You may take notes if you like. The technique can

obviously be applied to all possible consumption, and mindful consuming has been shown to also help people lose weight.⁷⁵

3. *Body Scan*. For this exercise you will need to lie on your back. In the exercise, you can scan all your body parts one by one in a mindful way. You can start at the top of your head, and then slowly move down your body to your shoulders and chest, and so on. I would recommend having somebody talk you through the exercise since it's quite easy to fall asleep when you're lying down, and there are many free audio downloads for this on the internet.
4. *Walking Meditation*. This moving meditation is very similar to the mindfulness practice described above, but it is done while walking. For this practice, commit to a few minutes of walking in absolute silence, and notice exactly how you place your feet, what the sensations are when you walk, your balance, etc. Walk very, very slowly and just enjoy the movement.

The practice of meditation takes time to master. When you first start, you might feel distracted a lot, and it may not be easy or pleasant at all. Over time however, the technique is extremely beneficial for many reasons. Give yourself at least three weeks to really try the technique, or join a meditation club if you're worried about losing your focus. I personally recommend meditating in the morning, right after you've had your shower and just before breakfast.

Technique 6: Cultivate Compassion



To understand the value of compassion, I'd like you to imagine a bucket. As the classic Zen proverb goes, when the bucket is filled with sand, there is little room for anything else. So, emptying the bucket is a first step to making more room, just as discarding your own past experiences could be one way to make room for you to be open to other people's experiences. But there's more to the story; *your experiences are filled with both positive and negative emotions*. What I mean is: you can put a lid on the bucket to stop it from filling up, to protect yourself from



Figure 18 Matthieu Ricard just before his meditation practice preparing for an EEG test at the Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 5 June 2008. Ricard practises compassion meditation a lot. Photo Jeff Miller / University of Wisconsin-Madison.

negative emotions, but that is likely to affect your experience of positive states as well. Therefore, these techniques do not only focus on emptying the bucket, but attempt to make the bucket larger. Below, I explain more about these techniques and science for cultivating compassion.

1. *Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM)*. Research shows that we can forgive people by having empathy for them.⁷⁶ A great way to practise this is known as the practice of ‘loving kindness’, which also increases the amount of positive emotions we experience and leads to a heightened sense of purpose in life, according to research.⁷⁷ A fierce practitioner of this technique is the ‘happiest man alive’, Matthieu Ricard,⁷⁸ and the effects were shown in brain scans taken while he meditated. Core to the technique is the notion that it starts with compassion and love for the self, since this is the basis for how you treat others.⁷⁹ Here’s how to practise loving kindness:⁸⁰
 - + Sit down, and relax your body completely. Make sure you choose a posture you can hold comfortably for at least 10 minutes.
 - + Start by focusing on your breathing, notice how your breath comes in, and leaves your body again. With every outward breath, feel your

body relax deeper and deeper. This may feel like warmth, or heaviness. Enjoy the sensations of relaxing deeper and deeper.

- + Firstly, wish yourself happiness and good health. You can use the sentence, 'May I be happy and free of illness.'
- + Secondly, wish yourself freedom of stress, anger, and other negative emotions. 'May I practise letting go of stress, letting go of anger...,' 'May I be kind to myself, and let go of my regrets.'
- + Thirdly, wish yourself good progress in your life journey, where you will keep growing and developing through everything you experience. 'May I grow wiser day by day, and be kind to myself more often.'
- + Next, wish good things to the people closest to you (family, mentors, friends, etc.) with sentences like, 'May my friends be happy, be healthy and not suffer from illness.' You may make this as personal as you like.
- + Follow all the steps with a compassionate, kind and warm intention.

Another version of the technique is practised by one of our well-being consultants, Spencer Heijnen:

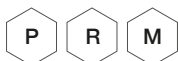
- + Start with deep body relaxation through breathing.
- + In your mind, move to a bird's eye view where you see yourself sitting, wherever you may be. Zoom out further and further, until you end up deep in outer space. Realise that space is really, really BIG. Reflect on the improbability of life, revolving around our little sun, in exactly the right position in space. Reflect on the miracles that are needed to bring you to existence and how beautiful it is that you're aware of them.
- + Be grateful for the whole experience.
- + Concentrate on your breathing for a couple of minutes.
- + Then move to the steps mentioned in the LKM meditation exercise above where you wish yourself, those close around you, all the warmth and love you can imagine.
- + Expand even further, direct this feeling to all beings everywhere without distinction, including people that you have difficulties with.

2. *Compassion Meditation*.⁸¹ This meditation, focused on generating

compassion and good feelings towards other people, is essentially a next step up from LKM. Research shows that feeling compassionate has many benefits — like being more altruistic, experiencing more positive emotions and ruminating less about things that went wrong in the past.⁸² Compassion has recently been linked to the activity of the vagus nerve, a nerve that is — among other things — related to the body's oxytocin networks in our body. The vagus nerve is therefore known by some researchers simply as the 'love nerve'. The more compassion we feel, the stronger the vagus nerve seems to respond.⁸³ Funnily enough, the more we feel pride, the weaker the vagus nerve responds. Therefore, scientists like Dacher Keltner propose that the strength of our vagus nerve may well be the physiological parameter behind altruism and our ethical intuitions in life, and aims to help people achieve better 'vagal profiles'. The vagus nerve could be 'trained' through compassion meditation. Here's one of the techniques to do this:

- + Sit and relax your body completely. Take a posture that you can hold for at least 10 minutes. Close your eyes, and start by becoming aware of your breathing.
- + Once you feel comfortable and relaxed, visualise a person you hold very dear walking up to you, and standing in front of you. Look this person in the eyes, and feel the warmth and emotions you feel for this person. Become aware of the sensations in your body, and how your body reacts to this person (e.g. heartbeat). If you can, strengthen the emotions for this person even further to make it the warmest, most beautiful emotions you can consciously create.
- + Secondly, visualise a person you feel neutral towards (e.g. a neighbour or colleague). Try to generate the same warmth and compassion for this person.
- + Thirdly, and finally, visualise a person you do not like, or even hate. Try again to generate the same warmth, compassion or love for this person. Realise that this person may not have treated you well, but is in his/her own way trying to become happy, and may suffer from things you do not realise.
- + Close the practice with a few minutes of silent meditation, where you just focus on your breathing.

Technique 7: Forgive and Let Go



Letting go of difficult moments is hard for most people, and I have personally long considered the skill of ‘letting go’ the most important skill in life, and maybe I still do. I think my belief is based on my Buddhist background, where the teachings clearly state that life contains suffering (e.g. death, illness, loss of loved ones), and that all people will face this one day or another.⁸⁴ The fact that letting go is a critical skill has been used by many great artists whose songs touch people because the theme is so relevant for all of us, with ‘Let it Be’ by The Beatles as a famous example. In this section, I want to share with you a technique that can help you to let go of unpleasant experiences that still consume your energy.

A bit of background before we move to the exercises itself. In my company, Purpose+, we deliver flourish programmes for employees. Those programmes are essentially science-based happiness programmes for employees and leaders, where the focus is primarily on building flourishing individuals and organisations through positive rituals. The aim of the programme is to move people from good (‘life is OK-ish’) to great (‘life is beautiful’). We find that, during the programmes, many people bring past experiences with them, things that have hurt them and that are still draining their energy. The good part is that these things are usually addressed during the programme, but the sad part is that it often happens quite late in the course. The reason seems to be that people are not yet ready to focus on the positive things completely when they haven’t dealt with the things that are in the way.⁸⁵

Most people prefer not to think about the past experiences that weren’t so nice, hoping to forget them. In reality, however, we often don’t forget them so easily since we’re wired to remember negative experiences more than positive. The result can be that certain memories come back to haunt us, and these can drain energy over time. In the exercises below, you will therefore be challenged to face this head on. The focus

EXPERIENCE

The challenge of forgiveness

When people perceive you as the ‘happiness guy’, it’s easy to be misunderstood. I have seen that clients believe I’m always happy, or should always be happy since, in their eyes, I am the expert in the field. However, I, of course, also suffer from my own challenges when it comes to being happy in life.

One of the challenges for me relates to forgiveness. I have noticed that I can be quite harsh when it comes to people who, as I perceive it, haven’t treated me well. I can vividly recall moments when people didn’t treat me well, even from my childhood. My usual way today is to not show pain, but to react forcefully. I have always preferred to go for a ‘clean cut’, not talking to the person again and keeping my pride in the process. However, over time, I’ve come to doubt this approach. As my coach described it in a personal conversation, ‘You have your army on top of the hill, and you always find a strategy to keep it there.’⁸⁶ Reflecting on my strategy, I can conclude that it’s effective to not see the person again, but not to get the pain out of my system. It may seem strong, but really forgiving someone can be much stronger.

So, there are serious benefits to really forgiving the people who have hurt us, and the main one is to let the pain flow out of your own system. The process involves taking the perspective of the people you need to forgive, and recognising that what we’re experiencing with them is a reflection of how well they are doing instead of what they are trying to do to us. The power of forgiveness has been known to Buddhists for centuries,⁸⁷ and is now validated by science as well.

is on embracing the past, and forgiving those who have hurt you. You can do this in the following ways:

1. *Learning from Challenges.*^{88,89} This exercise asks you to recall and write about personal challenges you have experienced in the past.

This is a powerful exercise, and it can be a challenge to get started. It works as follows: write for around 20 minutes about a harmful thing somebody did to you. In that writing, focus on the positive aspects of the experience: how did this person's actions lead to positive consequences for you? Perhaps you became aware of personal strengths you did not realise you had before, or perhaps a relationship became stronger as a result. Explore the possibilities. Make sure you mention a) what personal benefits came out of the experience for you, b) how your life has become better as a result, and c) any additional lessons you see coming out of this.

2. *Forgiveness Letter.*⁹⁰ This letter is meant to help heal stubborn emotional scars from the past. You can actually send the letter to this person, or choose to write it just for its own sake. You can write the letter any way you want, as long as you're open about your feelings, explain what your memories are, and how these memories have affected you. Be clear about your intention to really forgive this person, and it can really help to imagine their perspective on the issue. Ideally, you end the letter by wishing this person the best. This exercise is tremendously powerful, and I sincerely hope you're willing to try it if you have someone you need to forgive.

If you want to learn more about forgiveness in a more clinical setting (forgiving offences, lack of love from parents, etc.), I strongly recommend looking into Robert Enright's work. He published the well-researched Enright Forgiveness Process Model.⁹¹

Technique 8: Show Unexpected Kindness



Happiness is a positive sum game. That means that if we're happy, those around us have a higher chance of being happy too. Contrast this with the way we usually do business, which we often perceive to be a zero sum game (if I win, the other must lose). In fact, research shows that this positive sum game can actually be observed in social networks. For example, when a good friend that lives within a mile of us becomes

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

The happiness formula

Where a physicist's dream is to find the final equation for all universal laws, so could a formula for happiness be considered the ultimate dream for a psychologist. Researchers, therefore, recently tried to create the 'happiness formula', and got quite far in describing how people would feel over time.⁹⁶ They gave their participants a probabilistic reward task, in which they had to make choices and received rewards over time. In computational findings, that were later checked in a large-scale replication with over 18,000 participants, they found a formula that described our mental life quite well in such tasks. The formula is shown below.

$$\text{Happiness}(t) = w_0 + w_1 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} CR_j + w_2 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} EV_j + w_3 \sum_{j=1}^t \gamma^{t-j} RPE_j$$

What the formula shows is the following: momentary happiness changes from time to time and depends primarily not on how well things are going, but how well things go compared to our expectations. It also shows that happiness does indeed revolve around a certain set point in our brains, and that there is a 'memory' factor (γ in the formula), which makes things that happened further in the past have a reduced effect.

Since we liked the formula so much, we had it printed on the back of our business cards.

happy, it actually increases our chances of becoming happy by 25%. A happy next door neighbour has an even bigger impact, at 34%, and a brother or sister who feels happy and lives within a mile of us, also affects us, by 14%.⁹² These patterns eventually lead to clusters of happy and unhappy people in social networks. You can view those networks online when you search for the Framingham Study by Christakis and Fowler (2008). Note that similar network effects have been found for loneliness⁹³ and even smoking.⁹⁴

There is more interesting research on the notion of kindness, and altruism. When I studied psychology, we used to debate whether altruism was even possible. Authors like Richard Dawkins, with his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976), stated that from a gene's perspective, being self-centred is often more functional. The theory has recently come under huge scrutiny though, and the new theory, called multi-level selection theory,⁹⁵ explains that although selfish individuals may be more successful than altruistic individuals, *groups of altruists beat groups of selfish individuals in terms of survival*. The theory adds another layer to the model — the group level — and argues that, when evolution is viewed from a group perspective, altruism makes perfect sense.

Simply knowing about this research can have strong implications for how we experience and target our own happiness levels. As you may have already realised earlier in this book, once you start targeting happiness consciously, much of it is a social process. Many of the things that make people happy are essentially social in nature, and many of the greatest moments in life people report to us were moments they shared with others.⁹⁷

To strengthen the interpersonal side of happiness, here are a few exercises that are great fun to try:

1. *Random Act of Kindness (RAK)*. This technique, simple as it seems, can be tremendously powerful. It means doing something unexpected for someone else, just for the sake of it. It can be as small as giving a compliment or as large as taking time to help someone with a problem. If you need inspiration to come up with some great RAKs, there's even a website to help you, with over 10,000 examples of random acts of kindness.⁹⁸
2. *Gift of Time*.⁹⁹ This technique is remarkably simple, but still highly effective in our current time where stress is the norm rather than the exception. In one week, make sure you consciously plan three 'gifts of time' for people that you know would benefit. Plan a meeting with this person, drop by to say hi, or just give them a call. It is similar to a random act of kindness, but in this exercise you consciously spend time with people you know would benefit.

3. *Secret Good Deed.*¹⁰⁰ This exercise is similar to the random act of kindness, but it has an extra twist: not revealing who actually did the good deed. Examples include emptying a bin for somebody, leaving an apple on someone's desk at work, or leaving a coin at the coffee machine to pay for the next person's coffee. Buddhists believe that secret good deeds are especially powerful, because others may eventually learn that goodness exists, and people are helping them.

One tip before you try this: remember that the first RAK is the most difficult one. You might feel slightly uncomfortable at first, or a little outside your comfort zone. This is natural, since you haven't done it before. Give yourself some time, you will get used to it and love it.

Technique 9: Strengthen Relationships



To, once again, see how valuable social networks are for us, let's take a look at one of the most famous happiness studies around. The study, done by two founders of positive psychology, Martin Seligman and Ed Diener, focused specifically on the cream of the crop: the ultra-happy people in our society. Seligman and Diener were mainly interested in how the happiest people alive got to be so happy. When they compared the upper 10% of consistently very happy people with average or very unhappy people, they found a couple of differences between the groups. The happiest group was more extrovert in general, more agreeable, less neurotic and also scored lower on the psychopathology scale. However, the most decisive factor was the quality of their social networks; they reported stronger romantic and other social relationships.¹⁰¹

Before we dive deep into techniques that can enhance positive conversations, let's take a brief look at things that do not work. A few new studies have examined the impact of digital social networks on our well-being, and found overall no effects on our well-being; it doesn't make us any happier or unhappier. However, that's when you add up all

the numbers and find they cancel each other out. Several other studies show the risks of these networks, such as social isolation, depression and cyber-bullying.^{102, 103} This seems especially true for people who do not have honest profiles on their web pages.¹⁰⁴ The research shows that authenticity and well-being are linked, making it harder to be authentic online when you are having difficulties, with the lack of authenticity creating problems for the future again.

In short, social networks can be harmful for some people, and are certainly not a complete replacement for face-to-face interactions. Will the incredible size of online networks compensate for this? That's unlikely. Psychologists have known for years that people's capacity to really know people (actually hold information about them in our memory so we 'know' them) is limited, and estimated to be possible for up to about 150 people.¹⁰⁵ (Note that people nowadays have 338 Facebook friends on average, according to Google.) In addition, these 150 people are not even guaranteed to be real friends;¹⁰⁶ research found that the actual number of real friends we have has gone down from 2.94 in 1985 to 2.08 in 2004.¹⁰⁷

So far, few positive signs about online social networks, but many of us still follow them rigorously. Let's take a look at what social networks can do for us if we manage to expand our networks. To answer this question, researchers recently checked how much it mattered to people if they doubled their network of real friends, compared to doubling of their online network size. As expected, most people chose to expand their circles in real life, while few chose bigger online social networks. Doubling our inner circle, for example, from 2 to 4 close friends, caused people to score about 50% higher on a subjective well-being questionnaire. To compare, researchers then looked at how the expansion of digital friends affected people, and found virtually no effect.¹⁰⁸ Other insights from the same study show that friends can be more important for some people than others; they seemed to matter more to people who were single, divorced or widowed, than to people who were living with a partner.

How do we extend our networks in a positive way? One great way is by focusing more on deepening positive conversations. But many of us don't bring the proper attention and depth to a positive conversation, thinking instead that it's the negative, or sad, conversations that truly define a relationship. Here's the technique:¹⁰⁹

1 Active Constructive Responding (ACR). Research shows that when somebody tells us a positive story — a great moment in their day, for example — we can react in four different ways. We can respond in an *active way*, where we show real involvement in the topic, or a *passive way*, where we show little involvement. In addition, we can be *constructive*, asking questions to learn more while avoiding judgements, or *destructive*, where we judge people on what they tell us. This leads to four possible styles of responding, explained further below, of which only the first one helps to truly build a relationship with that individual.

- + *Active constructive*: involved, encouraging, genuinely interested, asking open questions that invite the person to relive the experience: 'Wow, can you tell me more?'; 'How did you feel when that happened?'; 'What did you experience when this happened...?'
- + *Passive constructive*: some positively phrased interest, but no invitation to tell more. 'OK, glad you liked it', 'Good for you'. 'Cool'.
- + *Active destructive*: judging, actively going against the storyteller. 'Really, why did you do THAT for god's sake?'
- + *Passive destructive*: judging, but too passive to make any real comment about it. 'I'm sorry but I'm working here, can't you see that?'. 'Not interested in this'. Judging may also be shown in non-verbal behaviour.

This may seem to be a simple truth, but when I ask people to record how much of their time they actually spend in the active constructive 'zone' with their loved ones, many of them have to admit that it's only a fraction of their time. They miss opportunities to build relationships many times per day, often because they're busy, have other things on their mind, or are just not in the right mood for it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Responding to good stories

To become aware of how much time you're actually spending in the active constructive zone, have a conversation with a close relative, friend or partner at home and ask how he/she experiences your reactions to their positive news stories. If you like, you can use this grid to help you in the conversation.

Active Constructive: Joy Multiplier Real listening, asking questions to help the speaker 'relive' the experience in all its depth. Capitalising on the good things. <i>'That sounds great, can you tell me more? What did you feel when this happened?'</i> Percentage of time spent here:	Active Destructive: Joy Thief Quashing the event. Going against the speaker, judging the story right away. Active participation. <i>'Really? Don't you think that this is making you more stressed? I don't think you should be doing that.'</i> Percentage of time spent here:
Passive Constructive: Conversation Killer Quiet, low-energy support. Not inviting the other person to truly speak up. May be distracted. <i>'That's nice. Good for you.'</i> Percentage of time spent here:	Passive Destructive: Conversation Hijacker Ignoring the event. Changing focus to something else. Hijacking the conversation. <i>'Let me tell you about my story.'</i> Percentage of time spent here:

Here are some tips on the notion of ACR that I've learned over the last two years. Most people report that they could, and should, spend way more time in the ACR corner than they currently do. When I ask why that's the case, most people report issues that are relatively easy to deal with, like lack of time, or feeling stressed. I recommend the following: when you go home, or visit your friends, build in a break that's at least 10 minutes long where you don't work. In that break, wind down, take a walk outside, or do something else that makes you relaxed. You might be 10 minutes later, but it will be the better version of you that arrives.

2 Build Love Maps. One of the most surprising insights in recent psychology has been reported by John Gottman, an American specialist on the field of marriage and divorce prediction, and author of the book *The Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work* (2000). Gottman became famous by predicting which couples would divorce with 93.6% accuracy in a recent study.¹¹⁰

Gottman advocates building the Sound Relationship House.¹¹¹ The basis of the Sound Relationship House is constructed by building love maps with your partner. The love maps technique is beautiful in its simplicity. It involves responding to preselected statements, together with your partner, in order to allocate 'mental room' for each other's worlds. Here are some examples of the areas to consider in the love map exercise:

- + I can name my partner's best friend.
- + I can tell you which stresses my partner is currently facing.
- + I can tell you of my partner's life dreams.
- + I can tell you about my partner's basic philosophy of life.
- + I know the three most special times in my partner's life.

The love map exercise can be ordered through the Gottman Institute website.

3 Find Energisers. In our workshops on positive relationships, we often use a technique called the network map to get an insight into how well people are currently connected with people that energise them. Here it is.

Firstly, get some markers (a black, green and red one at least) and an empty piece of paper. Then, draw your own network map, showing all the relationships you truly care about. Start by putting your own initials in the centre, then write around them the initials of the people you hold dear. Make sure you choose a distance that fits how you feel about them. Once you have all the initials in place, use colour coding to emphasise the current quality of the relationship. Thick lines can mean a strong bond, green lines can mean 'energising' relationships, while red

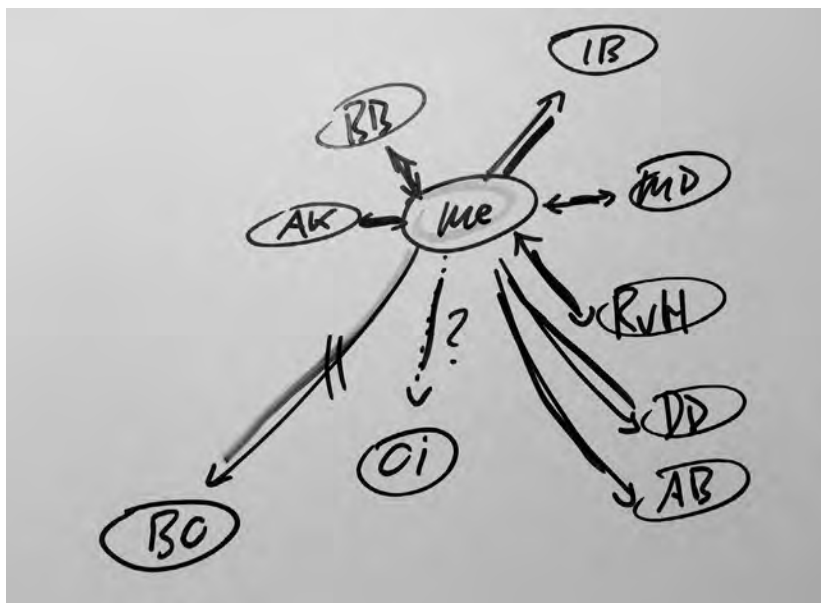
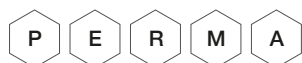


Figure 19 Example of a relatively simple network map in which energising relationships and energy draining relationships are highlighted

lines mean that the relationship is currently ‘energy draining’. You can add symbols if you like too, like ‘guru’, ‘love’ or ‘teacher’, corresponding to how you see that particular person. An example of a network map is shown above.

When you’re done, feel free to discuss it with somebody at home to get a fresh perspective on it. Then, use the network map to make choices: how can you strengthen relationships with energisers around you? And how can you make sure you suffer less from energy drainage? Building a strong network of energisers around you is one of the best gifts you can give yourself.

Technique 10: Build on Strengths



With Technique 5 (Practise Mindfulness) I mentioned how relevant mindfulness is to positive psychology. But there is one more technique

of extreme importance in this field and which could be considered the cornerstone of positive psychology. That technique is to use our unique, character strengths in new ways.

There are many times in our lives when we find that we need to develop ourselves. It starts at school, where learning new skills is the key priority for all children. But it doesn't stop there, it continues when we start working. Although I'm all for learning (I even used to plan 60 minutes of learning time a day),¹¹² I think we tend to forget something in the way we approach learning in our lives: the natural, 'signature', strengths we bring to the table. Where most learning approaches are essentially based on gap analysis (fixing what's wrong), positive learning holds the notion that we can expand on what there is in abundance. There are a lot of benefits known for people who build on their strengths more, documented by research:¹¹³

- + They tend to be happier.
- + They tend to perform better.
- + They are more engaged at work.
- + They show higher levels of self-esteem.
- + They are perceived to be better by their customers.
- + They experience less stress.
- + They show higher levels of energy and vitality.
- + They are more effective at developing themselves and growing as individuals.

This is quite a list of benefits. That is also the reason that companies like Gallup have focused on it so much, and companies like McKinsey & Company include developing natural strengths in their global people strategy. The beauty of the benefits is twofold, in my view: a) using your strengths actually makes you happier, and b) using your strengths more is a more effective way to develop yourself further.

Before we go into techniques surrounding character, or signature, strengths, allow me to explain what a strength actually is. Signature strengths are things you're good at AND that give you energy at the same time. This is crucial to understand since this is exactly what makes



Figure 20 Strengths can be found at the intersection of performance and passion

these strengths so powerful. When you find the intersection of *what you love doing* and *what you're very good at*, then you're in the signature strengths zone. This explanation is illustrated by the above figure.

It is important to note that there *is* such a thing as a universal strength. When researchers started strengths-based research, they selected particular strengths that they thought could work well in all cultures. They did this through scanning many different cultural texts (religious and non-religious) to find what people generally believed to be real 'virtues', or 'character strengths' in life. In the end, they ended with a list of 24 strengths, the VIA (values in action) list of strengths, that are considered universally important, regardless of whether you ask people in Venezuela, the US or Azerbaijan. Strengths like kindness, fairness, authenticity, gratitude and open-mindedness were considered highly important by all cultures. Some others, like modesty, prudence and self-regulation, were considered important by some cultures and less by others. All the strengths can be plotted on a diagram with two axes — one representing mind and heart, the other representing self and others.¹¹⁴

Below are the techniques to use to build on your strengths.

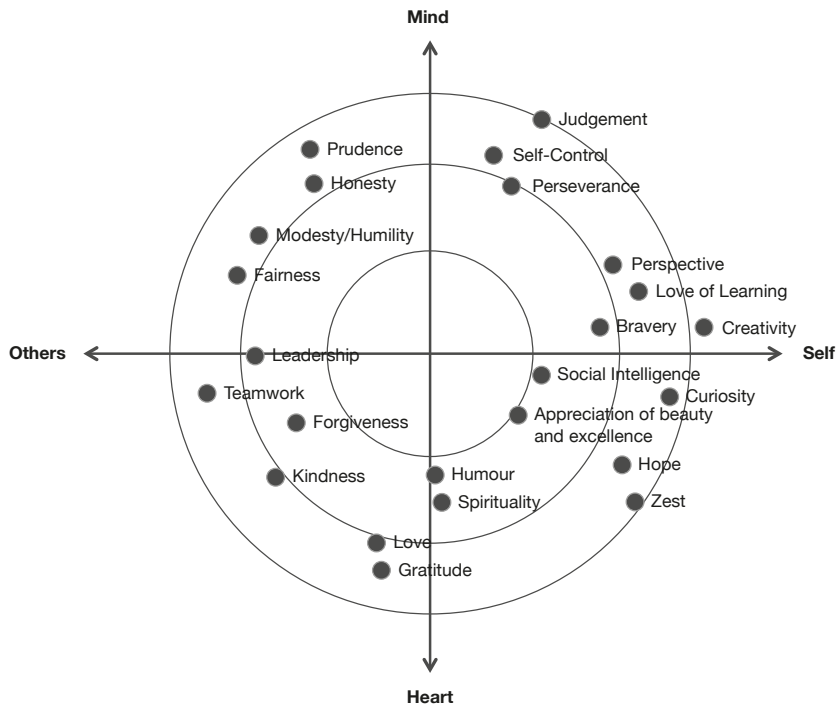


Figure 21 Classification of VIA strengths on a grid. Most people will find that their strengths cluster in one area

EXPERIENCE

Using strengths to create a high-performance team

I first tried the concept of signature strengths with a football team, SBV Excelsior, in the Netherlands. The team played in the top league, and was ranked last when I came in. Excelsior has an annual budget of less than 3 million euro, which is not a lot when compared to other clubs in the league, like Ajax which exceeds 100 million euro per year, so we knew all additional scientific insights would be necessary to stay in the league.

When I first met the team, their coach at the time, Alex Pastoor, told me they had a significant problem: out of 12 matches away

from their own stadium, they had not won a single one. When I discussed this with the team, they seemed to lack energy, self-esteem, courage and confidence. This is rare for football teams in my experience since they often have a few egos and have their own, specific culture where showing off is relatively normal. But this group was different. When I explored further, they also seemed to be unaware of their strengths as a group, even though they played in the top league. They told me they didn't have any strengths to build on (didn't I know they were ranked last? they asked).

I decided to take a risk and recommended to the coach that they completely change the way they approach training. First, I had the team sit together to identify the character and footballing strengths of each individual. The coach, meanwhile, did a similar exercise in the next room: he had to name at least 3 core strengths for each individual player. In the week following this session, the coach and players met to discuss these strengths and how to build on them in the rest of the season. The focus was on making their strengths really count, instead of repairing all the weaknesses they had. In reality, this meant that training schedules changed; in the past, they focused mostly on correcting mistakes, they now focused as much on doing what they were good at. And our work paid off. The team won 70% more points after the interventions (we did 4 workshops in total), and they won 4 out of the last 6 matches away from home. (For more on my work with SBV Excelsior, see chapter 5, Success stories so far.)

1 Discover Your Unique Strengths. Complete a survey to find out more about yourself. There are some great surveys around for this. I personally recommend the Capp2Realise survey, the Gallup Strengths Finder 2.0 or the VIA Strengths survey. All three are fine, and although they have slightly different purposes, they will still give you valuable insights. You can do the shortened version of the VIA survey for free at our website www.purposeplus.co. The Capp and Gallup surveys cost around US\$20–25 each.

2 Ask for Strengths-based Feedback. Ask 5 friends to tell you about the strengths they see in you as a person. Do this by asking them to explicitly name 5 character strengths they think you possess and to include examples of where you clearly show those strengths. You may even find that they'll ask you to do the same for them later. In our workshops, we usually send people a draft e-mail to help them with this process, this is it:

Dear ...,

For a workshop I'm attending about the science of happiness (or: an exercise I'm doing on the science of happiness), I need to gather strengths-based feedback about myself. I hope you're willing to help me with this process. You can do so by answering the questions below:

- What unique strengths do you see in me as a person?*
- Can you elaborate on when you see me use each particular strength?*

Thanks in advance!

X

3 Use Your Strengths in New Ways.¹¹⁵ Insight into your strengths is a good first step, but the real impact comes from ritualising new behaviours based on your insights. This process may take some time and works best when you commit to a week-long trial of using your strengths in new ways. Ideally, pick one particular strength and design (together with friends, loved ones, a coach, or even your boss if you like) some ways to use that particular strength in new ways. If you need inspiration, there is a great document by Tayyab Rashid available for download online called '340 Ways to Use Your Strengths'. Once you have designed a ritual, test it out. Be honest with yourself; it should be both challenging, fun and rewarding, if it's not, go back to the drawing board.

The process of discovering your natural strengths is a highly inspiring and energising one. I can only hope that you're willing to spend the time on it that it deserves.

Technique 11: Write Your Meaning Maker Story



In our corporate science of happiness (flourish) programmes, we target the real backbone of human happiness. We do this by targeting all 5 PERMA dimensions week by week. The big hit for many people comes in the fourth session, which focuses on the PERMA dimension of meaning, where people have to write their own ‘meaning maker story.’¹¹⁶ The exercise consists of asking three fundamental life questions and analysing how they relate to each other. At the end of the course, people present their answers in front of a group in their own particular way.¹¹⁷ Here I will share the process for you to try it yourself. This exercise takes place over the course of a few weeks and embodies people’s summaries of learnings in their positive psychology course, so it may be worthwhile to start with some other exercises first. This is how it works.

1 The Three Big Questions. This exercise involves answering three big questions on the topics of pleasure, meaning and strengths. It’s a highly

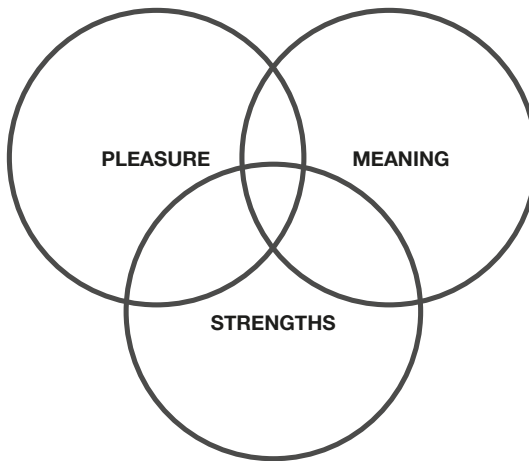


Figure 22 The model for the ‘three big questions’ exercise is based on three circles, and the final story should reflect personal insights about the overlap between the circles

social process, where discussion on the topic is the most valuable component of its success. In the famous Harvard happiness course, taught by Tal Ben-Shahar, it was supposedly the students' favourite exercise. In our course, we use it to summarise everything the participants have learned in order to create one coherent story. The process for this exercise is below:

Day 1: On the first day, try to get clarity about what truly gives you pleasure in life. Questions to help you in this process:

- + What activities do you really love doing?
- + What gave you pleasure as a child?
- + What were your three best moments last year? Why?
- + When do you 'play'?

Write down your answers for about 10–20 minutes. Don't limit yourself to your work-life, just reflect on you as a person. When you're done, consider discussing the list with someone who knows you well, like your mother or partner, to see if they recognise you in what you've written.

Day 2: On the second day, focus on what is meaningful for you in life. Questions to help you in this process:

- + What are you grateful for at this moment in time?
- + How do you want to be remembered after you die?
- + How have you positively affected others recently?

Again, take 10–20 minutes to write down your answers, and consider talking about it with someone who knows you well.

Day 3: On the third day, focus on your signature strengths. I recommend following the exercises in Technique 9; make sure you do at least one survey and get some feedback from loved ones. Afterwards, write your own story. After that, take a break for 1–2 days to let your mind rest.

Day 4–7: Once you’ve answered the individual questions, there’s one more step to take: connecting the dots. This is where the pieces fall into place. I recommend taking at least 3 days for this, and make sure you talk about it with people that know you well to get some feedback. Ideally this is done at dinner with loved ones, or over coffee with people who know you well. Questions to help you in this final process:

- + When do you experience flow in life?
- + When were you at your best? Why?
- + Who do you look up to? What can you learn about yourself from this particular individual?

I strongly recommend making an end product that will serve as your current story of self. We usually call this end product the ‘meaning maker story’. Of course, this will be a living document, but it will be valuable in the future to have something that truly represents how you see yourself today. An example of a great end product a client showed me recently is below:

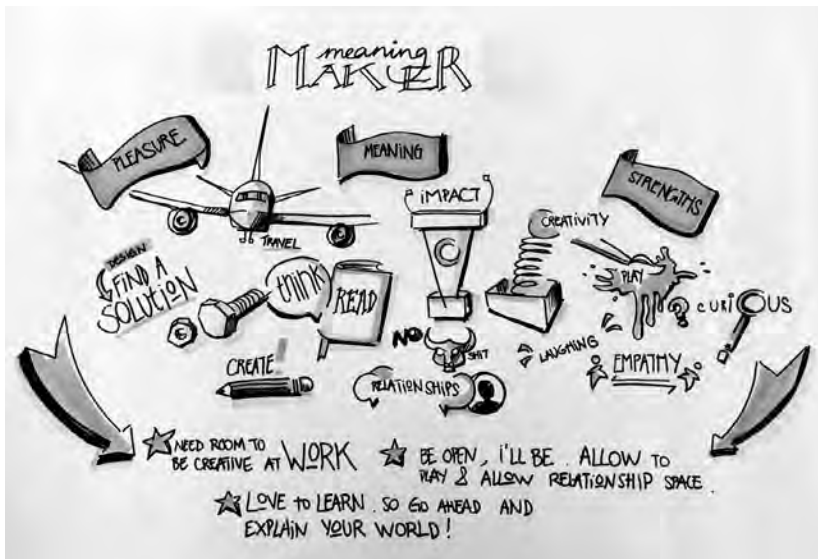


Figure 23 The highly creative way of making a personal meaning maker story, created by a client at NASCOM, a digital service design company in Belgium

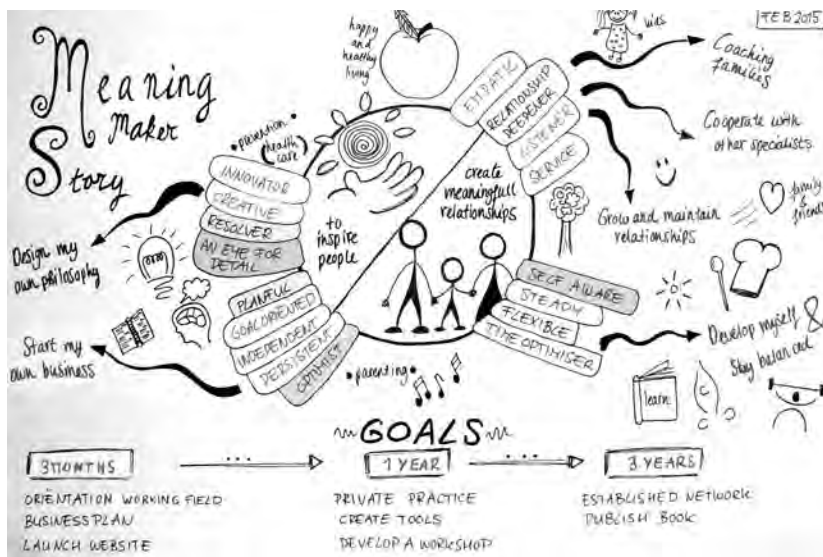
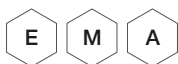


Figure 24 Another great meaning maker story by a student in the Honours Class at the University of Amsterdam

2 Best Reflected Self.¹¹⁸ This technique values the positive emotions we experience, as well as our motivation levels to reach self-concordant goals (see below). The instructions, taken and adapted from Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006), are below:

- + Thinking about your best possible self means that you imagine yourself in the future, after everything has gone as well as it possibly could. You have worked hard and succeeded at accomplishing all of your life goals. Think of this as the realisation of your life dreams, and of your own best potential. Here, you are identifying the best possible way your life might turn out, to help guide your decisions now. You may not have thought about yourself in this way before, but research suggests that doing so can have a strong positive effect on your mood and life satisfaction. So, we'd like to ask you to continue thinking in this way over the next few weeks, following up on the initial writing that you're about to do.
- + In a couple of sentences, outline your ideal future life in as much detail as you can. Ideally, you will come back to this writing a couple of times in the next two weeks to create the perfect picture for yourself.

Technique 12: Set Self-concordant Goals



Goal setting is a powerful technique to boost performance and well-being in life. When the originators of goal setting theory (e.g. Edwin Locke) researched their hypothesis that goal setting was an effective method to boost performance, they found that science proved them right: more than 90% of studies on goal setting show that people with specific and challenging goals outperform those without them, with easy goals, or with just ‘do your best’ goals.¹¹⁹

What is less well known is that having clear goals in life can also make you happier.¹²⁰ Moreover, this effect has been documented for multiple cultures (Chinese, South Korean, US and Taiwanese). This happens when the goals we set are self-concordant, which happens when the goals truly relate to our *personal ambitions, interests, values and strengths*. The opposite way of setting goals is called ‘conditional goal setting’, where the goal is set based on a conception that happiness is an end-point achieved through the attainment of something else. For example: children who conceptualise happiness as an outcome dependent on their achievements in school. Conditional goal setting has been identified as a significant risk factor in the development of depression in adults and children.¹²¹

However, when goals are set in a way that they feel liberating and powerful and are self-concordant, they can set the stage for future success and well-being.¹²²

Below is a technique you can use to set self-concordant goals for yourself:

SMART Goals with Rituals. Ideally, write your meaning maker story (Technique 10) before you begin setting your goals. This will help you get clarity on your true needs and interests in life. Then, follow the process below to achieve the things you truly care about:

EXPERIENCE

Top-down vs bottom-up goal setting in organisations

Although the technique of goal setting is widely known, and used in most companies, many managers find that it's not as easy as it sounds. The problem with goal setting is that when there is a clear goal, the way forward has essentially been identified, restricting people in their perceived freedom. This can lead to a feeling that goal setting is essentially a limiting technique, and therefore not useful for building happiness. Especially today, with a younger generation demanding more freedom and purpose at work, setting simple, top-down goals doesn't work well for most teams.

The crux is in whether goals truly relate to the people they're set for. To be effective, goals have to relate to what a person truly wants to contribute to. They should correspond to the deeper values that a person holds. In addition, the goal should be positively stated, reflecting what the person wants, rather than something to avoid. And, ideally but not necessarily, goals should build on natural strengths. If these two things are taken into account, a goal can be considered self-concordant.

One company that is doing this particularly well is Google, where people are encouraged to write down their own goals in a mind map. In the second stage of the technique, they are asked to draw lines between their own goals, and the goals of Google as a whole, to see if they can connect the two. If not, they will be helped to find something more meaningful to them. I strongly believe that thinking in this direction is the future, and future organisations will not be able to exist, and attract key talent, without clarity of the 'purpose' part.

- + Write down, or draw if you like, something you would truly love to achieve/learn/accomplish a year from now.¹²³ Make sure you frame your goal positively (something you want rather than something you want to avoid), and that your goal is written down in a

SMART¹²⁴ way. If you need inspiration, don't hesitate to ask others what they would truly love to achieve next year. It may well lead to beautiful conversations.

- + Break your own self-concordant goal down into rituals: things you can do daily, or weekly, that will help you reach the goal. When you're done, you might want to perform the 'ritual check': how energising will this ritual be for you when you do it? Rate it 1–10. When you score below 8, go back to the drawing board. Also, check if you are using your strengths in the rituals you design. When you do, it will be easier to maintain them.
- + Plan celebration moments along the way. Visualise outcomes and ways to celebrate them. It can help to make a goal board at home, where progression, or great moments can be visualised.
- + Plan for failure positively. Think about how you may be challenged during the process. A great way to do this is by *writing down the excuses you would make to not reach the goal*. Read them back and find a solution for them one by one, until there is no excuse left.¹²⁵

Finally, a word about mind-set with regard to setting, and achieving, goals. When I start working with management teams, I always discuss the key drivers behind successful people in one of the first sessions and ask them what they think. I'm usually surprised how little people know about this. Factors like IQ (regular intelligence), EQ (emotional intelligence), and coming from a good background are usually mentioned,¹²⁶ but most people forget the most relevant factor: grit.

Grit, or passion and persistence for long-term goals, is a relatively recent term in this sense. It is close to resilience, and also relates to self-regulation.¹²⁷ Individuals with a lot of grit are able to maintain their determination and motivation over time, despite failures and adversity. Although the research behind the link between IQ and success is strong,^{128,129} grit has been discovered as a factor that may even be more important than IQ in predicting success over time.^{130,131,132} What's more, it seems unrelated to IQ, or even slightly adversely related to it. As Angela Duckworth, the originator of most of the grit

research, explains: *‘What I do know is that talent doesn’t make you gritty. Our data shows very clearly that there are many talented individuals who simply do not follow through on their commitments.’*

DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Grit

There are a couple of grit scales available on the market. The ones produced by Angela Duckworth are protected for some reason (we obviously believe in opening happiness research completely), but here’s one that Martin Seligman produced. It will give you a good indication of how gritty you are.

Rate your response to the following statements as follows:

1 = Not like me at all, 2 = Not much like me, 3 = Somewhat like me, 4 = Mostly like me, 5 = Very much like me

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from old ones.
2. Setbacks do not discourage me.
3. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.
4. I am a hard worker.
5. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.
6. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.
7. I finish whatever I begin.
8. I am diligent.

When you’re done, add your scores on 2, 4, 7 and 8. Then add 1, 3, 5 and 6, and subtract this number from 24. Add both outcomes together and divide by 8 for your final score. You can find the norm scores below, note that the average for men is 3.37, and for women 3.43.

Decile	Male (N = 4.169)	Female (N = 6.972)
1st	2.50	2.50
2nd	2.83	2.88
3rd	3.06	3.13
4th	3.25	3.25
5th	3.38	3.50
6th	3.54	3.63
7th	3.75	3.79
8th	3.92	4.00
9th	4.21	4.25
10th	5	5.00

My advice on goal setting relates to grit; *give yourself permission to be human*. It doesn't have to be perfect right away, and it probably won't be. Prepare for the marathon rather than the sprint. Remember that it takes a few weeks for rituals to be really embedded into your life. Sometimes, good is better than perfect.

To summarise this section, goals can be extremely inspirational and empowering once you set them in the right way. They can liberate you by providing direction and clarity on what to do now. The crux is in self-concordance: goals have to relate to who you are at the very core.

Technique 13: Replay Life's Best Moments



As humans, we have an average of 67 years to experience life on our planet.¹³³ Although our ancestors had a much shorter life expectancy (just 26 years in the Bronze and Iron Age), it is still not much time to consume everything life has to offer. And, however much we wish for

it, there has still been no evidence for a life after death, making life itself fragile — and the experience of life extremely precious.^{134, 135}

One of the people who inspires me most is Richard Feynman, the great theoretical physicist who taught at Cornell University and the California Institute of Technology. I see Feynman as one of the greatest geniuses that has ever lived, not only because of his skills in physics, but because of his never-ending interest in life and his ability to create great experiences around him. Creating peak experiences and savouring life's best moments is a beautiful and important skill in life, and one that you can do anywhere, anytime. It is also a skill that many of us (including me) tend to devalue. It has been called positive mental time travel by researchers in this field, and has a lot of benefits for how well we feel.¹³⁶ It is also known that people high in self-esteem are more likely to savour good moments than people with lower self-esteem.¹³⁷

Here are a few proven techniques to help you savour the good things in life:

1 Reflect on Peak Experiences.¹³⁸ One of the first exercises we do in workshops involves reflecting on the best moments in life, which generally leads to beautiful conversations and new connections between people. The exercise is the following: think about the single, most beautiful experience you had in the last 12 months, and write it down in detail. Include what happened, how you felt, and who was present. A great way to discuss it is to ask friends or family members to do the same, and have a dinner where everybody shares his or her experience and what they learned from it.

2 Anticipate Good Things. As A.A. Milne intuitively realised when he wrote the Winnie-the-Pooh story on the anticipation of honey — confirmed by the happiness formula mentioned in Technique 7 (Show Unexpected Kindness) — there is a role for anticipation when it comes to being happy. Anticipation of future events can make us happier when we engage in positive mental time travel, or unhappier, when we do the opposite.

Here is the wisdom from *Winnie-the-Pooh*:

'Well,' said Pooh, 'What I like best,' and then he had to stop and think. Because although Eating Honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called.

That our thinking about the future can also affect us in ways other than positive ones, was also shown by the highly creative Dutch writer Toon Tellegen in his story about the ant and the squirrel:

The sun was shining and the squirrel and the ant were sitting in the grass on the riverbank. Above them the willow rustled, in front of them the water burbled, and in the distance the thrush was singing.

'In my opinion,' said the squirrel, 'I am happy now.' The ant said nothing and chewed at a blade of grass.

'I think,' said the squirrel, 'that I could never be happier than I am now.'

'Well...' said the ant, 'and if a honey cake came flying by with a note on it saying: for the squirrel and the ant..?'

'Yes,' said the squirrel. 'You're right. Then I should be even happier. But happier than that is impossible.'

'Well...' said the ant, 'and if I'd been planning to go on a journey and I said: squirrel, I'm not going, I'm staying with you, all right?'

'Yes,' said the squirrel. 'You're right. Then I should be even happier..' And if the cricket was throwing a really big party tonight, and if you suddenly got a letter from the whale with an invitation, and if today the sun didn't set any more, and if everything smelled of fresh beech nuts...?'

The squirrel didn't answer. He looked at the sparkling water and thought: so actually I'm not really that happy after all...

What these writers intuitively felt is correct; when we anticipate good things in the future we feel happier. The finding also works the other way around, when we are depressed we generally find it harder to anticipate great things in the future.¹³⁹

So, here's the technique: pick something you truly love doing. Plan it into your calendar in a way you can anticipate it. Obviously, the anticipatory effects can be even stronger if you share the anticipation with a partner or friend. Another trick is to make the anticipated event already visible in some ways (desktop picture, picture board, etc.).

3 Capitalise on the Good.¹⁴⁰ We all experience good moments and successful moments, however small they may be. The technique of capitalising on good moments is a relatively simple one: it means celebrating when you have achieved something. A few things seem especially important according to research in this field:

- + Don't keep your success to yourself, communicate your success/happiness.
- + When others actively respond to your 'celebration event', the impact is much stronger, so find a way to engage others in it.
- + Celebrate with those close to you, this can enhance the perceived quality of the relationship on both sides.

4 Be Present in Good Times. The technique of mindfulness has been described in more detail in Technique 5 (Practise Mindfulness), but it is worth noting that the same technique has shown to be effective in good experiences. In this case, we become conscious of a great moment while it is unfolding — and choose to be more mindful of the experience in order to deepen it. This may well lead to experiencing the unfolding event in more detail, with more awareness and possibly a different perception of time. It can also be powerful to consciously express to someone else the fact that you're truly enjoying the moment, as it may trigger this person to be more mindful of the experience as well.

4

HOW TO CREATE FLOURISHING ORGANISATIONS

4.1

HOW TO USE THIS CHAPTER

In this part of the book, I will share with you many practical ways to embed the science of happiness into corporate life. I have divided this half of the book into 3 areas to make it applicable for different target groups, and allow you to skip to the part that's most relevant to you:

- + Positive leadership.
- + Positive management.
- + Positive team membership.

But don't skip ahead just yet. First, let me give you some background on how essential well-being is to an organisation.

4.2

TOWARDS A NEW BUSINESS PARADIGM

In this chapter, I intend to show that work and well-being can, and should, go together. Embedding the science of happiness in the way we do business is a real possibility, through which we can create a more purpose-driven way of doing business, where a meaningful contribution to humanity is seen as a part of organisational success.

After reading the first part of this book, I hope you agree with me that there is a lot of knowledge available about human happiness. Although this knowledge is out there, and despite the obvious benefits, few companies integrate the information into their daily operations.¹ Most companies instead rely more on the ‘devil they know’: the old, industrial era pyramidal structures that stress performance, control and efficiency in their performance indicators. In most companies, employee happiness ratings don’t exist, or they amount to little more than occupational health and safety, low absence or ‘engagement’ ratings.² Most companies have yet to target the good-to-great aspects for the people in their human resources (HR) departments because they simply lack the tools, programmes and processes to do so. It is no surprise then that they often fail to make well-being and/or purpose a strategic part of their business, but have instead assigned it to a faraway corner of the organisation, responsible for its social responsibilities. This is clearly not a future-proof solution. Meaningful business starts with including meaning in the entire value chain, not just in single, separate, departments that don’t deal with the core business of the organisation. There is huge potential for making our organisations more positive and meaningful.

In the first part of the book, I mentioned briefly that happy employees outperform their less happy counterparts, take fewer sick days, earn more on average, are more motivated, more engaged, more creative and are better leaders. This research primarily compares extremely happy people with their unhappy, or moderately happy counterparts. I also painted the picture of the world today, with roughly only 17% of our population flourishing.³ Although company data is hard to acquire, I doubt it will be very different in most organisations since the data includes people in the general population who work in organisations themselves.

I believe strongly that positive organisations will do better on many accounts, and the first research points in this direction. First of all, organisations with positive leadership practices have better levels of (aggregated) performance: including higher levels of productivity, bet-

ter quality, better customer satisfaction and employee retention.⁴ The authors of these studies included organisations in 16 different industries, including profit and non-profit organisations. Especially notable is the fact that this positive relationship was also found in organisations that recently experienced downsizing, where employees tend to have a more negative perception of the organisation.

Another study on positive organisations targeted just this: *if you need to downsize, how can you best approach it?* The study was conducted in the US airline industry following the tragedy of 11 September 2001. When the airlines were permitted to fly again, the number of passengers topped at 80% of the previous levels; a problem since the model was based on an 86% seat-fill rate. Therefore, many companies in this industry were forced to downsize significantly. A study compared 9 airlines and how they approached the process showed that organisations that adhered to positive practices (e.g. how well they were able to maintain the social capital in the organisation, preserve dignity, financial support and safety nets for employees), showed that firms that implemented positive practices made significantly more money and recovered more quickly than those that did not.⁵

The story is even easier to tell when we just focus on leaders. Research shows that the positive energy of the unit leader is directly linked to a wide variety of benefits; it predicts the job satisfaction of those being led, their well-being, their engagement at work and their performance. It also directly contributes to the cohesion of teams, and their learning orientation and drive to innovate.⁶ Leaders can create rich, dense information-sharing teams that share openly and discuss new ideas frequently, or create teams and organisations where the norm is to just do what you need to do. However, studies show that high-performing organisations have roughly three times more 'positive energising' networks than low performing organisations.⁷ This has been known to creative companies like Pixar for years.⁸

Another argument could be made for performance at team level, where positive teams outperform teams that are less positive. In research that

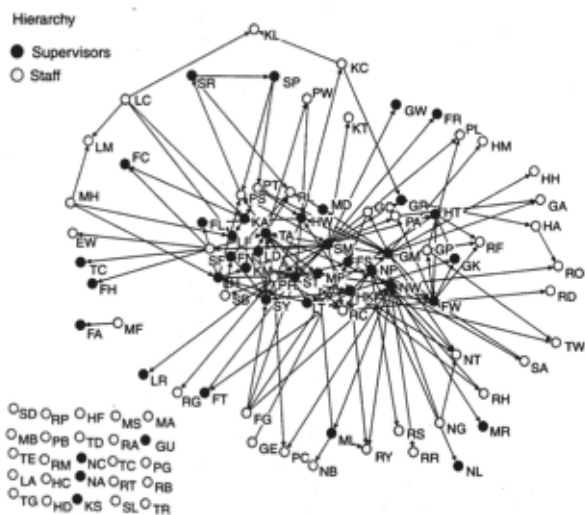
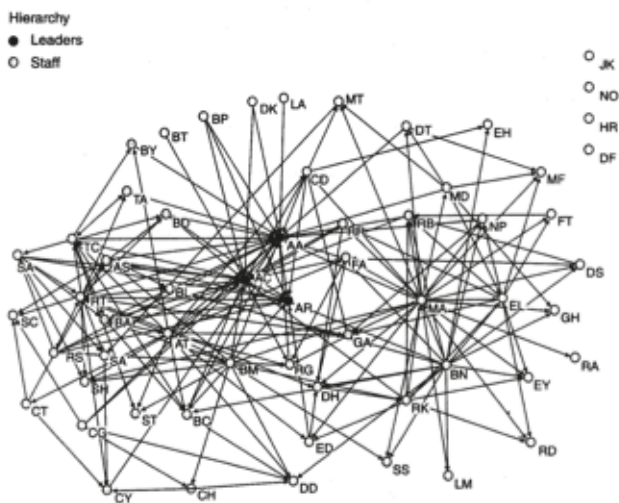


Figure 25 Social network analysis for leaders with a healthy energising network, and with a de-energising network that misses opportunities⁹

by now has become famous, Losada and Heaphy (2003) investigated how successful teams interacted. You can find the results below. They show clearly that in high-performing teams, team members approach each other more positively, have a healthy ratio between questioning and asserting and focus on the self or on others.¹⁰

Communication pattern	Team performance		
	High	Medium	Low
Positive Statement Ratio (supportive, encouraging, appreciation)	5.6 to 1	1.8 to 1	0.36 to 1
Inquiry/Advocacy Ratio (questioning versus asserting)	1.1 to 1	0.67 to 1	0.05 to 1
Others/Self Ratio (external focus versus internal focus)	0.94 to 1	0.62 to 1	0.03 to 1

Table 5: How our communication patterns link to team performance

Although the field of positive organisations is a relatively new one — with the first *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* (a dictionary in this field) dating from 2013 — the conclusions are powerful, and the gap between ‘as is’ in organisations and ‘could be’ is considerable. Most research done on organisations is on ‘virtuousness’: a concept associated with human flourishing, and with what humans and organisations aspire to be when they are at their best. According to the economist Adam Smith and sociologist Georg Simmel, virtuousness is the basis upon which all societies and economies flourish because virtuousness is synonymous with the internalisation of moral rules that produce social harmony.¹¹ In short, it incorporates both *moral goodness and social betterment*, and the internal *flourishing state* that’s needed for people to get there.

I believe most companies do not have a plan for creating a flourishing and virtuous organisation. So, that’s what the second part of this book is about. I believe creating positive organisations is the key to extraordinarily high performance, generating positive deviance results,

PERSONAL REFLECTION

How happy is your organisation?

The first I time I asked this question was around two years ago, to a group of people who represented the well-being department of their organisation. They were invited to a special event on well-being, where I would be one of the speakers. When I asked the crowd to do a quick and dirty assessment of how happy people were in the company they represented (I gave them three categories: suffering, moderately happy, flourishing), I was surprised by their answers. Although most people claimed to have a moderately happy group of employees, there were quite some willing to admit that it wasn't even so good. To my mind this was amazing, how could people be responsible for this and not know anything about the research in this field?

So, here's my question to you: where would you place the people in your organisation? And why?

creating remarkable vitality in the workplace and creating a more meaningful way of doing business. It is my intention to make it as pragmatic as possible and to build on the science previously presented. Although I fully realise that this book will not be the definitive answer, I hope it may stir some real discussions on the topic in your organisation.

4.3

POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

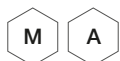
Leading means taking responsibility, making choices and serving people in the best possible way. Although psychologists have been searching for decades for the optimal personality profile for leaders, they haven't yet found the conclusive answer. As a leader, sometimes leaps of faith are needed, and sometimes a cautious step-by-step

progression is required. When it comes to making decisions, sometimes democracy is the key and sometimes you'll need to show your skills in autocracy. Research on leadership is, therefore, surprisingly inconclusive. There are many right and many wrong ways. If there's one conclusion to be drawn from all leadership research out there, it's that there is no single truth to leadership, many different styles might work, and many different environments might require different leadership styles.

But, this doesn't mean that there are no right or wrong *actions* to take as a leader. There are still some general truths that apply to leaders all over the world. I want to mention one of those truths here because I've seen big problems occur in companies due to a failure to adhere to this truth. The crucial truth I'm talking about is: leadership means there will be times when you have to take a stand. You simply have to make real decisions when they come your way, even when you don't know all the answers. Yes, you can be wrong at times, and you'll be responsible for that. But if you don't take a stand, stagnation or decline is inevitable. Hiding is simply not an option when you're the leader. Why do I mention this here specifically? Because, when it comes to embedding the science of happiness in organisations, I've seen many leaders intuitively feel that it could be much better but leave it because they're afraid of taking risks. They often agree with my message privately, but never truly initiate a change because it hasn't been done yet, or it may seem awkward to other people.

Personally, I feel this is a real problem. For me, leadership is about shaping destiny. It's about making decisions, even when you don't have all the facts. It's about taking a stand, daring to be wrong at times and facing the truth about it. To really grow as a species, we need people that lead and design a better life for ourselves and those we care about, not people who just 'manage' the things that come their way.

Technique 1: Reframe Success



Business, if we do it well, leads to profits. By being profitable, companies become more valuable and shareholders get higher returns, and we are able to sustain our practices and provide some safety to our workforce. This paradigm, which was essentially created in the industrial era, has served us well for the last century, but it is beginning to crumble. It is crumbling because 70% of our workforce is not engaged in their work,¹² most of our leaders do not have a clear sense of purpose,¹³ inequality on our planet is still on the rise,¹⁴ and the current way of doing business is depleting our resources much faster than we can replenish them.¹⁵ In short, there is a reason why the UN advocates a new economic paradigm, time and time again.¹⁶

Another important reason to reframe our business is the fact that some experts, notably Umair Haque, believe our business paradigm has reached a state of diminishing returns. In the past, if you invested \$1,000 in a broad basket of equities you would probably have made some profit. In the last 10 years, you would have ended up with just \$800.¹⁷ And the American Dream, where social mobility is theoretically limitless and everybody can become rich, has proved to be an illusion: only 4% of Americans from the bottom 20% of income groups make it to the top 20% in their lifetime.¹⁸ Despite all claims of a classless society, about 62% of Americans from the top fifth of incomes stay in the top two-fifths, and the same holds for those in low income groups: 65% from the bottom fifth of income groups stay in the lowest two-fifths.¹⁹ The truth is that inequality is on the rise, and countries with higher levels of inequality (measured through the Gini index) have lower mobility, making it harder to grow to a higher level of income. This connection is known as The Great Gatsby Curve, and is shown below.

That this paradigm shift is so difficult to implement relates to the fact that the status quo is so fundamental and hardwired into our daily

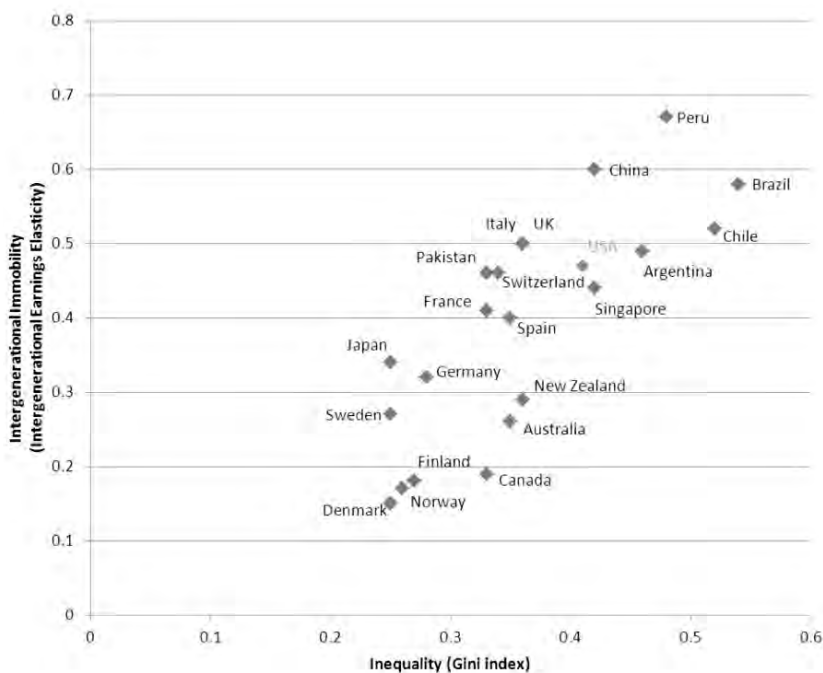


Figure 26 The Great Gatsby Curve

rituals that we often fail to notice that it exists in the first place. The economic paradigm we're currently living in is as prevalent as the air we breathe. Most of us, therefore, simply accept this as 'the way it works'. But in the end, it is in our power as leaders to shape the paradigm we live in as others have shaped paradigms before.

In order to design a new status quo, I believe we have to realise that most of our thinking is based on a single mental model. We tend to think things are either this or that. They are either black or white. Organisations are either for profit or not-for-profit. I believe the future paradigm will prove this thinking outdated; it will teach leaders to embrace paradoxes. A great example of this is Janus, the famous Roman god who looks two ways at the same time, and the corresponding thinking style is called Janusian thinking. It entails the art of combining opposites, thinking the world together.²⁰

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

How we measure success at Purpose+

When I founded Purpose+, I knew it would challenge everything I had learned about business. It involved many paradoxes, most of all the art of combining the science of happiness (a paradox in itself) with organisational performance.

So, when I started, I did so with the design of a new definition of success for our own organisation. The company, in my view, would be successful if it succeeded in helping people flourish,²¹ regardless of its financial success. I designed a simple formula to embody this shift, which was $S = 2Pu + Pr$, meaning that success (S) equals 2 times purpose (Pu) and 1 time profit (Pr). In short, it says that some activities that were only meaningful, but not profitable, could still be considered successful for the organisation. Therefore, we started the organisation by delivering 15 open workshops on the science of happiness that were not profitable, but highly meaningful for those who attended. We also provide 10% of our annual profit before taxes to charitable initiatives (called Purpose+Charity).²² The purpose part of our equation is further broken down into two components: number of people trained, and the impact on those people (measured in multiple ways, e.g. through surveys).

Note that, although the formula proved to be a success, my vision of completely re-designing organisations also backfired on other occasions. For 18 months, we didn't have an office as I considered it to be an overhead cost we didn't need. I can now say this was a mistake, a place where you can work, have fun and communicate together has proven to be a huge asset.

Janusian thinkers use the power of paradox as part of their success, combining two seemingly unrelated views into a single, coherent view of reality. It is refraining from the either/or way of thinking to embrace the genius of *AND* thinking. Albert Einstein was a great example of Janusian thinking, being able to picture an object both in motion and at rest at the same time. This insight eventually led him to develop his general theory of relativity. Louis Pasteur was another. He realised that disease could actually help to prevent disease, and with that insight created vaccines. Another example is Leonardo Da Vinci, who combined many seemingly unrelated streams of work to regularly come up with new inventions related to many different fields of expertise. I believe this skill — understanding the mental models we use to understand reality in order to transcend them — is crucial if we are to build a new paradigm.

Here are a few exercises to get you started:

I Start with Why.²³ As Simon Sinek mentions in his famous TED Talk, it all starts with why, and most companies begin with a desire to make something better. However, reading the average mission and vision statement makes yawning inevitable and often leaves the reader wondering what the real message is. It's time to change that, since mission and vision statements can be a powerful force within a company, if they're created in the right way. Let me give you some examples of what I mean:

Company name	Statement
Ralph Lauren	<i>'We have redefined the American style by providing quality products, creating worlds, and inviting people to take part in our dreams.'</i>
McDonald's	<i>'McDonald's vision is to be the world's best quick service restaurant experience. Being the best means providing outstanding quality, service, cleanliness and value, so that we make every customer in every restaurant smile.'</i>

SuperValu	<i>'Our mission at SuperValu always will be to serve our customers better than anyone else could serve them. We will provide our customers with value through our products and services, committing ourselves to providing the quality, variety and convenience they expect.'</i>
goHastings	<i>'To satisfy our customers' desires for personal entertainment and information through total customer satisfaction.'</i>

Table 6: Companies with profit-driven mission statements

Here are some examples that are notably better:

Company name	Statement
lululemon athletica	<i>'lululemon athletica creates components for people to live longer, healthier and more fun lives.'</i>
Google	<i>'To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.'</i>
Disney	<i>'To make people happy.'</i>
Merck	<i>'To make a difference in the lives of people globally through our innovative medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, consumer health and animal health products.'</i>

Table 7: Companies with purpose-driven vision statements

Although they're not perfect, these companies did a much better job of designing their mission and vision statements. They realised that the right question to ask first was the 'why' question.

So how could you reframe success for you organisation? Consider the following thought starters:

- + Success should be measured with more variables than financial wealth, so we should expand our existing measurements of business success. A good start is Purpose+Profit in which you could decide to split purpose into people and planet. This is called the 'triple bottom line' — people, planet and profit, and was first designed in 1994 by John Elkington, head of a company called SustainAbility.²⁴
- + The purposeful impact can be designed to include multiple layers

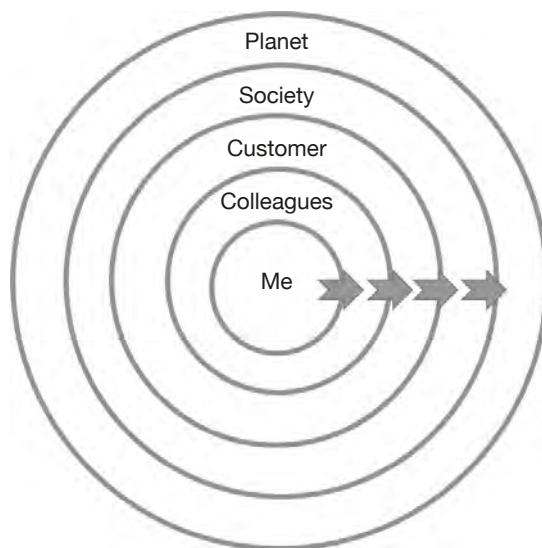


Figure 27 Multiple rings of impact to consider when designing the why of the organisation. Utilising one ring to impact another ring can lead to exponential impact

of granularity. It could start with you, then your colleagues within the organisation (and possibly their families), then customers of the organisation, then society, and in the end, the planet as a whole. The important shift in perception is simply that it is no longer only just about us and our colleagues, but includes extra rings of impact. A model to visualise this shift is pictured below (see Figure 27).

- + When you acknowledge the multiple ‘rings of impact’, there is the realisation that one person can have an exponential impact on society. In essence, the source of power is changing: it is less dependent on the hierarchical structures of the past, it is easier to get, and also easier to lose.²⁵ That’s why movements find it easier get traction, and that’s why it’s easier for us to have real, exponential impact when we do something right. The trick is to think in multiplication; how can the ring that you impact in turn impact the next ring.

2 Rethink the Success Formula.²⁶ This exercise is about how we measure success, given that we have a good why for the organisation. I advocate the use of a single formula that defines success for the organisation for the sake of simplicity. The big benefit of making a formula

for success — however simple and short it may be — is twofold. Firstly, every factor in the formula will have to include a value signifying how important the factor is for the organisation. In our case, the factor ‘purpose’ is twice as strong as profit, which is a guiding principle in everything we do. Secondly, using a formula implies that you’ll be calculating success, therefore, you’ll have to come up with ways to assess the purpose dimensions of your formula in a similar way that you measure other dimensions. And, as all leaders know, we are what we measure. In the end, of course, your annual report should reflect all the factors in your formula, not just profit. There are many ways to do this: the well-being surveys shown in this book assess human well-being and do so for free. Another great tool is the POS (positive organisational scholarship) survey designed by Kim Cameron and colleagues,²⁷ which measures positive practices within organisations. We have also seen clients who care about designing their own well-being surveys internally, using scales from multiple surveys. All in all, it usually takes about 1–3 weeks to come up with a company specific design, and it’s less hard than most leaders think.

A final note about designing the mission and vision statement in the boardroom: a debate usually starts about the rollout of the statement within the company. In my experience, it’s best to give people room to play with the concept a bit and allow them the freedom to see how to connect their personal ‘why’ to the organisational ‘why’. Just handing it to people in a top-down manner is rarely successful. To engage people with the concept of ‘why’, team leaders can present the statement to their teams and invite them to write their own mission statements based on the organisational statement. This way, the statement is made more personal and relevant, and people can feel that there’s room to express their own selves in their statements. All in all, this may lead people to actually believe and follow the statement and develop a real interest in it, which is definitely necessary for something representing the ‘soul’ of the company.

Technique 2: Think Abundance



As a CEO of a leadership development company recently told me, his main mental model for managing his former organisation had always been ‘gap analysis’. He had spent most of his time as CEO looking for negative deviance in certain performance indicators and often with frustration, anger, and even fear at times. Looking back, he told me that he only now feels aware of the model that was seen as ‘normal’, and that it could be done in other ways. That’s what this technique is all about.

When it comes to deviance from the norm, it can be either positive (abundance gaps) or negative (deficit gaps). Since we notice bad more than good, and bad events have a greater effect on us than good ones,²⁸ most leaders are well aware of the deficit gaps in their organisation. When I ask for a list of abundance gaps, they are usually less clear. So, here is a way to extend the mental model with a broader continuum: extend from negative deviance all the way to positive deviance, with multiple layers, including personal, organisational and any other layers you want to add.

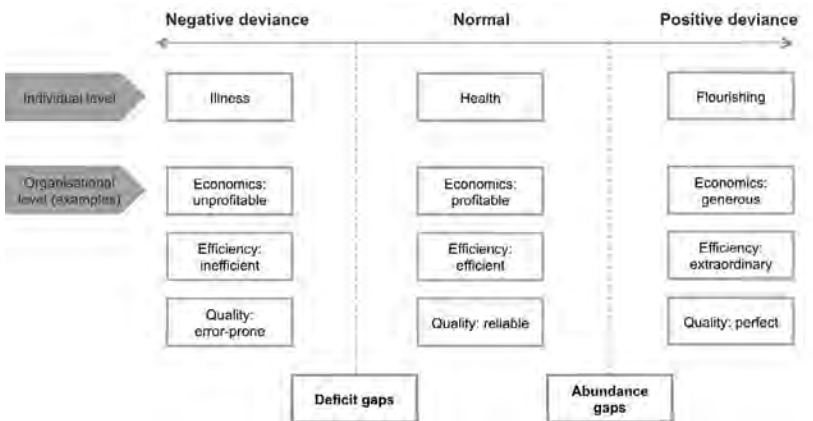


Figure 28 Continuum with both deficit gaps and abundance gaps, applicable to both personal and organisational development

There is substantial evidence that organisations with a ‘culture of abundance’ — where positive practices are present and strengths are known and utilised — show better performance over time. A recent study of the financial service business — an industry where positive practice may well be seen as irrelevant — showed the implementation of positive practices²⁹ was linked to financial performance, work climate, voluntary turnover and senior executive evaluations.³⁰ The study was replicated in the health care industry with similar results. Another set of studies showed that job satisfaction is positively related to the firm’s value (measured in future stock returns), confirming what positive psychologists already felt; the stock market does not value intangibles in firms, even when the results are independently verified through public surveys.³¹

You may realise that becoming more aware of what there is in abundance in the organisation, and letting people actually work with this and experience this, is directly linked to culture change. This is, therefore, no small feat. Culture can be defined in many ways, but it surely includes the behavioural habits that people engage in (visible) and the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads (implicit assumptions, unobservable). A culture change can therefore happen when people begin to think in new ways and abandon old paradigms. Here are some techniques to get this process started:

1 Find Fresh Perspectives. In order to move from A to B within an organisation, both A and B have to be clearly defined. Where A is known to people, B is usually not. Therefore, a good first step is to get outside perspectives from companies that truly do live the ‘abundance’ story. Some companies that are well known to embody aspects of positive organisations are Google, Netflix, NextJump, Zappos, Morning Star, IDEO, Semco, Houdini and AES.

Entrepreneurs would call this phase ‘sensing’,³² and this is where you commit to looking for new information, especially when it contradicts your own beliefs and assumptions. The comparison (A to B) that comes out of this is a valuable point to start the discussion internally. Great

things to ask these types of organisations relate to what the driving forces were behind a cultural transformation, and what the restraining forces have been.

2 Dare to Dream. When you think back to stories that truly affected you, what comes to mind? It may be Kennedy's speech in 1962 in which he declared that 'we choose to go to the moon', Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech, or Mandela's 'An ideal for which I am prepared to die' speech.³³ You may also have CEO speeches in mind like 'corporate immortality' (Ralph Peterson, CEO of CH2M HILL) or 'one person, one computer' (Steve Jobs, founder and former CEO of Apple). Whatever story you pick to inspire you, it's good to remember the following: what separates interesting from uninteresting information is the degree to which the speech contradicts weakly held assumptions and the status quo.³⁴ If information confirms what people already know, it is seen as common knowledge and therefore less interesting.

A vision of abundance for the organisation describes the organisation in a flourishing state, where the performance is great, meaningful, and where people truly care about it. Such a vision will need to incorporate a few elements:³⁵

- + It speaks to both the head and the heart.
- + It describes the positive impact that the organisation has on multiple levels: society, customer, the company itself, the working team and on people personally.³⁶
- + It is linked to the strengths of the organisation and makes those explicit.
- + It talks about positive sum games rather than zero sum games; it's not us against them, it's about positive impact creation together.
- + It may include stories of the past, where the organisation already showed strengths/great performance in this direction.
- + It may include strong metaphors or symbols to reinforce the vision.

Technique 3: Set Everest Goals



Goal setting has been shown to be effective in raising performance in organisations.³⁷ However, some goals are more effective than others: difficult goals are more effective than easy goals, SMART³⁸ and difficult goals are in turn more effective, and Everest Goals may in turn be even more effective in generating motivation and high levels of performance.³⁹ Everest Goals, a term coined by Kim Cameron, differ from just difficult goals on a number of points:

- + They are good in themselves, chosen for their own sake. They point directly to a virtue that people are intrinsically motivated to achieve (e.g. happiness, love, wisdom), and therefore possess inherent purpose and contribution. A good check for this is the following: would your goal still be worthwhile when the monetary rewards were zero?
- + They are radically optimistic and focus on achieving things rather than avoiding things. They signify positive deviance from what is generally believed to be possible.
- + They provide followers with sustainable positive energy.

Great examples of Everest Goals are the following:

- + Ford Motor Company: democratise the automobile (early 1900s).
- + Boeing: bring the world into the jet age (1950s).
- + US government (Kennedy): land on the moon within a decade (1960s).
- + Apple: one person, one computer (1980s).
- + Human Genome Project: completely and accurately sequence the 3 billion DNA base pairs that make up the human genome (1980s to 2000s).
- + Google: make the world's information universally accessible and useful (1990s).
- + B Corporation: Use the power of business to solve social and environmental problems (happening now).

- + Human Brain Project: achieve a unified, multi-level understanding of the human brain (happening now).
- + Tesla: to accelerate the advent of sustainable transport by bringing compelling mass market electric cars to market as soon as possible (happening now).
- + Purpose+: Create a network of science-based happiness experts to train 50,000 people around the world per year (happening now).

The main lesson here is the following: no organisation becomes extraordinary by chance. If you truly want your people to do something extraordinary, the goals of your organisation have to be aligned with this idea. In my view, organisations of the future will no longer be considered successful if they manage to stay alive through financial saturation; rather they will be judged on whether they were positive game changers or not.

Positive Disruption. To develop Everest Goals for your organisation, you will need to set some time aside. This is no small feat, and many organisations have either no purposeful goals at all or have failed to come up with them. It will, therefore, certainly require multiple meetings and lots of discussion to get this right. Here are questions to help you with the process:

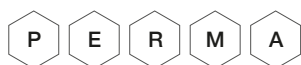
- + Why was your organisation founded in the first place?
- + What impact would disappear if your organisation disappeared?
What legacy would it leave behind?
- + How does your organisation affect people? How does it affect the planet?
- + What do people in the organisation care about most?
- + What core values or virtues does the organisation represent?
- + What would represent the best this organisation could be?

Having facilitated such processes a number of times before, I believe it is important to recognise the different phases in the process. In the beginning, it's important to spend time 'sensing' with the entire team involved, getting all perspectives on the table, including relevant

outside perspectives. When you feel you have gathered all the necessary information, it's time to envision a future for the organisation, first individually, then as a team. Restrain from 'wordsmithing' (correcting words or sentences) in this phase, since it won't help the creative process.

After a while, you may feel that the team is inherently aligned to the topics you truly care about, but you don't yet know how to frame them perfectly. This is normal, and will require some time. Allow people to spend time connecting with each other on the topics privately so they can sharpen their vision. It works well to have people bring their unique vision to the last meeting, where each person presents their ideas to the group. Afterwards, the team can write down the common essence of the vision in one or two sentences. This whole process could take two to three months to complete, but it might well be one of the most essential processes your organisation will ever go through.

Technique 4: Embed Well-being



People development in organisations is generally focused on developing skills. Most training programmes I've seen to help people with high potential move up the ladder include skills training in IQ related matters (problem solving, etc.), EQ related stuff (emotional intelligence, with skills like listening, asking the right questions, having difficult conversations, etc.) and some additional categories. In my view, this is incomplete since the well-being of those with high potential is not a given and it affects their performance and leadership in a multitude of ways.

The logic that I propose for people development is the following:

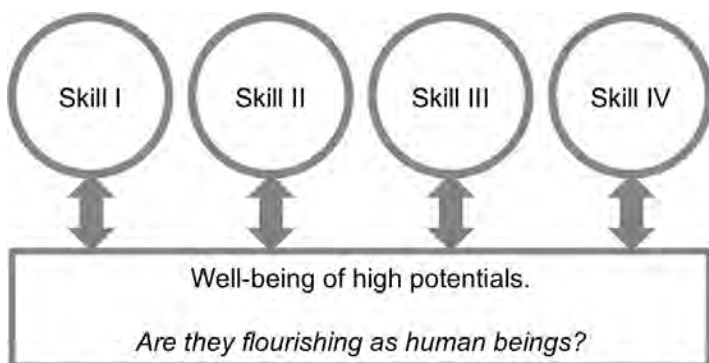


Figure 29 Well-being as the undercurrent in human development within organisations

The diagram shows something astoundingly simple: since the well-being of your talent pool is not a given,⁴⁰ and we know it serves as the most important variable for most people, it should be the undercurrent of training programmes. This is especially true for leaders, since their well-being and positivity affect their teams and subordinates directly.⁴¹

Here are a few ways to incorporate well-being into your training programmes:

- 1 **Assess Well-being.** Many, if not all, programmes for people with high potential start with an assessment of current skills and gaps in those skills. We highly recommend using the same rigour when it comes to well-being for a couple of reasons:
 - + It gives you an insight into how well people are doing, and where the gaps are in their own well-being, allowing you to make training programmes more specific — addressing the real needs that people have.
 - + It can open discussions quicker since people usually want to discuss their scores on the first day of the programme.
 - + It allows you to track the training programmes' effect (and possibly other variables, like job transitions) on participants' well-being.

There are a couple of ways to do this, as I've experienced it with clients. The easy way is to use a survey (e.g. Diener's Flourish Scale, since it's short and to the point, or the PERMA Profiler, which is slightly longer but has more depth) directly after the training programmes and again a couple of months later. Another way is to 'go big data' with real-time insights into employee well-being over time. The best approach I have seen so far literally checks behaviours instead of subjective experiences, where the right positive behaviours are identified and checked per specific department within the organisation. Obviously, the latter case is more complex and requires more commitment from the people in the programme, but it can generate highly valuable information.⁴²

2 Practise Well-being. Since there are many proven techniques to build well-being into people's lives, and in corporate teams, workshops can be an easy and effective way to promote the topic. If you find it hard to come up with examples of relevant workshops, here is a list of five to start you thinking. There is a more elaborate list in Chapter 5, where I share our stories so far, including the programmes we have delivered.

- + Building on strengths (all leaders).
- + Building positive relationships (all leaders, sales, customer service).
- + Building positive teams (all leaders).
- + Job crafting through pleasure, meaning, strengths — the Three Big Questions (all employees).
- + Experimentation and grit (business development, creative teams).

3 Move beyond Self. This technique involves the organisation committing to spending a certain percentage of pre-tax profits on purely good things, and have your people deliver it. At Purpose+, we commit to spending 10% on charity at the end of the year. In 2015, that is training 450 people in prisons in positive psychology. At Mconomy, a Dutch company involved in mobile accessories, 20% of company profits goes to a not-for-profit foundation aimed at helping people to smile genuinely; and at Ebbinge employees have a 'happiness budget' that can be used to do something that truly makes them happy, as long as they report back with the stories of how they sparked happiness around

them. Another, more famous example, is Bloomberg Philanthropies, a part of the company that's focused on meaningful change 'that can be felt'.

Technique 5: Spark Meaningful Innovation



Since virtuous organisations, and organisations with positive practices, perform better over time than non-virtuous organisations,⁴³ the question remains how organisations can be made more virtuous. This becomes increasingly important, especially for the younger generation (Generation Y) entering working life who value job fulfilment over financial reward.⁴⁴ Specifically, the Generation Y workforce needs to have a strong (social) purpose, which allows them to feel pride for the work they do and give them a feeling that they're really contributing to something. Here are two variations of the technique that I have seen:

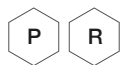
1 Allow Meaning Time.⁴⁵ This technique involves the allocation of a percentage of time to meaningful innovation for specific groups within the organisation, and has been popularised by Google as Innovation Time Off. Although this example may seem extreme, some of the more creative companies have rules like this to make work 'feel less like work', and spark creativity and purpose. The technique is rumoured to come from Hewlett Packard originally, where they had a 10% rule (Friday after lunch) where engineers could work on something they perceived as meaningful. The benefits for Google that came out of their 20% time projects include Gmail, Google News and Google Talk. According to Marissa Meyer, the current CEO of Yahoo, 50% of what Google launched in a certain period was invented in the 20% Innovation Time Off time.

2 Create Hack Days. Close to the percentage time technique is the Hack Day at Yahoo (or a hackathon, where there are multiple days), where all the engineers in a particular division get 24 hours off to

build anything they want.⁴⁶ Atlassian has a similar initiative called ShipIt Day, where employees get the chance to work on anything related to their products, as long as they deliver it within 24 hours.⁴⁷ Non-engineers get involved too, although the ‘hacking’ might have a different form. I have seen such days facilitated on management structure and company principles for an entire, internal organisation, for example.

The 20% rule may not be for everyone, but could well be a technique that sparks engagement, motivation, and purpose in organisations. The principles behind it are even more useful; provide employees with full accountability for what they produce, but only for a given period of time so the risks to the organisation are limited.

Technique 6: Create Positive Networks



As mentioned earlier in this chapter, positive relationships in organisations foster great performance,⁴⁸ and positive energy in teams relates to team performance.⁴⁹ Positive energy can be understood as a combination of feelings of passion, vitality and zest — as opposed to feelings of negative energy, with feelings of anxiety, failure and a lack of energy. Below are a number of exercises to assess, and build, positive networks in your organisation.

1 Positive Network Analysis. Team members can be experienced as either energisers or de-energisers, based on a number of questions. The technique used for this is called social network analysis (SNA), and it has been used by a number of companies to create insights into the real networks within the company. A great example is IDEO, a company that regularly visualises its ‘helpers network’ to strengthen their culture of helping others. Here are a few differences between energisers and de-energisers:⁵⁰

Energisers	De-energisers
They help other people flourish	They do not allow others to be valued
They see opportunities	They see roadblocks
They are genuine and authentic	They are superficial and inauthentic
They smile a lot	They are mostly sombre and solemn
They solve problems	They create problems
They are frequently grateful	They are frequently critical

Table 8: Differences between ‘energisers’ and ‘de-energisers’ in networks

A great way to get moving in this direction is to get insights into your positive energy networks within the company. There are many tools (paid, non-paid) online to help you. A great one is UCINET from www.analytictech.com, although it only works on Windows computers. With this software, you can ask each person in the team to rate other team members through the following questions:

When I interact with..., what happens to my energy?

1 = I am very de-energised

2 = I am moderately de-energised

3 = I am slightly de-energised

4 = I am neither energised nor de-energised

5 = I am slightly positively energised

6 = I am moderately positively energised

7 = I am very positively energised

The answers to these questions give you the information you need to perform a social network analysis — based on positive energy — of your team. The questions below can help you further structure this analysis and zoom in on the right topics:

- + Who are the energisers on the team? Can they be strengthened further in their role and/or be rewarded for it?
- + What are the personal attributes of these people? Could they teach this to other people, and if so, how?

- + What is the density of the network overall? How can it be enhanced?

The results of this exercise should produce something similar to Figure 25, from earlier in this chapter.

2 Ring of Fire. Once you know how well your team is doing with regard to positive networks, it's time to come up with a plan to make the network even stronger. In all the teams I work with — whether they are corporate management teams or elite sports teams — I standardise feedback practices on the first day to work in this area. I do this because I know that honest and regular feedback is one of the most critical areas in teamwork.⁵¹ This exercise is called the Ring of Fire as it works with high intensity rings where people provide, and receive, fast and powerful feedback. The beauty of the technique lies in the fact that people don't have much time to think, allowing spontaneity to exist while reducing politics in teams. I usually use the technique in every quarterly meeting. It works like this:

- + Divide your team into two halves. Ask one half to form a circle with their shoulders almost touching. They should face outwards.
- + The remaining half of the team then forms a circle around the first circle, looking inwards. In this way, everybody should be able to find one partner. A good check for this is to let people shake hands with their partner. If one person is left (unequal number in team), let this person wait outside the two circles for now.
- + In the circle, work in 1-minute feedback rounds. The inner circle always begins for one minute, followed by the outer circle for one minute.
- + After 2 minutes are gone, the outer circle moves clockwise, so everybody finds a new partner. This is the moment where the person left out can be substituted for another person in the outer circle.
- + It is very important to manage the time well and provide people with the right questions to answer. I usually raise my hand when the time (1 minute) is up and ask everyone to raise their hand too so the signal is clear to everyone. The questions I provide are:

- + What makes you great in my eyes is...
- + What you could do to shine even more is...

3 Contribution Cards. Another great way to deliver positive feedback within the team, where people have more time to think about what they want to say to people, is the following:

- + Hand out pieces of paper, or cards, to all team members, so they can write feedback for every team member. For example, if there are ten people in the team, everybody receives nine cards.
- + Explain that you want your team members to write about the special contribution each team member brings to the team. They will have ten minutes to write the cards (provide more time when needed), and should do so in silence. They should write a card for everybody, regardless of how well they think they know this person.
- + The feedback sentences to complete are the following:
 - + What I see as your unique contribution to this team is...
 - + What I see as your unique character strengths are...
 - + What I especially value about your contribution is...
- + After the time is up, start some music and ask people to walk around, handing each other the feedback cards with an explanation about what they wrote.

4 Flower Shower. Another great way to show feedback is by saying thanks for the work done together, and the fact that you have spent another period in your lives together on something you both value. I usually do this at the end of a particular period (e.g. a year of working together).

The exercise is exactly the same as the contribution cards, but this time it's focused on thanking people for their time, effort and contributions in the last period. The questions you can use are:

- + I want to thank you in particular for...
- + What I have valued in this last year of working together is...
- + I want you to know that I have appreciated this a lot last year because...

Technique 7: Role Model Positive Change



Change is notoriously hard, and 70% of large-scale change programmes fail.⁵² When changing cultures, nothing is more important than leaders who serve as role models for the new behaviours. This is because people learn best by looking at how others succeed or fail. Role models are therefore crucial to change the culture within an organisation. In fact, researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimate the ideal learning formula to be 90% social (learning from mistakes and successes of others) and just 10% solemn (thinking hard yourself).⁵³

McKinsey & Company therefore works with a very useful model when designing change programmes, called the Influence Model,⁵⁴ which highlights four different categories organisations need to get right simultaneously in order to drive change successfully. The four categories are shown below.

Role modelling 'I see my leaders, colleagues, and staff behaving differently.'	A compelling story 'I understand what is being asked of me and it makes sense.'
Skills required for change 'I have the skills and opportunities to behave in the new way.'	Reinforcement mechanisms 'I see that our structures, processes and systems support the change I am being asked to make.'

Table 9: The McKinsey influence model

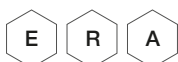
The research behind those four factors is strong: transformations with a clear change story are 3.7 times more likely to be successful than those without a story; having the structures and processes aligned with the needed change leads to those programmes being 4.2 times more successful than those without; and programmes where leaders are trained in new skills in line with the change are 2.4 times more successful than those where this didn't happen. Finally, having programmes where leaders were role models for the change were 4.1 times

more successful than those where this didn't happen.⁵⁵ So, here's the exercise:

Sacrifice Visibly. Since telling a compelling story is only the beginning, actions are needed to reinforce the words. As a leader, it is very important that those actions are visible to those you lead and that these actions inspire the team to follow in your footsteps.

A great personal example comes from when I prepared a hockey team for their next season by putting them through a 'sweat lodge' exercise. This exercise is very intense, and involves 2.5 hours in a completely dark tent where the temperature averages 43C. Sioux Indians used it in the past to prepare for and spiritually recover from their battles. When I told the team that we would go in there to prepare for the season, their coach Russell Garcia — less fit and much older than the players — joined in voluntarily to 'suffer with the team'. This created a great amount of respect among the team members, who then all followed suit. My question to you is: what could you do to visibly show your team the vision you believe in?

Technique 8: Ask for Help



In large organisations, much of the network value is underutilised, for a number of reasons: leaders do not ask for enough help, structures are too complex to offer help effectively, or overly-full diaries don't allow time for anything other than the usual. However, people are usually willing to give their insights and resources when asked, especially when they understand the need for it and when it can also enhance their reputation as leaders.⁵⁶ Great creative companies like IDEO and Pixar are known for their meetings where everyone is encouraged to share resources (e.g. 'plussing' in Pixar).⁵⁷ This insight has led experts in the field to explore this area in more detail, and a great example of how to leverage internal networks has been popularised by Wayne Baker through his concept of Reciprocity Rings.^{58,59} The formula used by

Baker, one of the leading researchers in the field of reciprocity in organisations, is as follows:

$$\text{Social Capital} = \text{Networks} + \text{Generalised Reciprocity}$$

Generalised reciprocity is especially relevant here, as it refers to a general culture of helping others without expecting direct rewards in return. This contrasts with 'direct reciprocity' where I help you and you help me back, and relies instead on a 'pay it forward' vibe where everybody helps everybody else with specific requests. Research shows that one exercise of Reciprocity Rings can have a monetary value of over US\$150,000, with collective timesaving of more than 1,600 hours.⁶⁰ The exercise also builds community, and allows leaders to form: people who offer the most contributions tend to be rated as more competent leaders.

The Reciprocity Ring exercise is surprisingly simple. Here is how to do it yourself:

Reciprocity Rings. In this exercise, you will essentially build a positive network in order to solve business problems that exist within the team. The essence of the exercise is simple: everybody states his/her problem clearly, and is helped by the entire group afterwards. The focus is entirely on giving.

- + Step 1: Take a flip chart or whiteboard and write down the names of all the people in the meeting. To make it more visually appealing, you can also write the names on sticky notes (all the same colour) and group them in a large circle on the board.
- + Step 2: Hand out sticky notes (of different colours) and ask all the people in the room to write down *one specific request, or issue with which they need help*. This may be personal or work-related. The request must be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) in order for people to best help you later. Here are some examples:
 - I need to become more recognised as a potential leader in my organisation.

- I'm about to spend \$50,000 on an outside vendor to solve my SAP issues, and need a cheaper alternative.
- I need advice on how best to downsize my unit by 15%.
- + Step 3: Everyone sticks their request on the board next to their name, and the others read each of them and try to identify *resources* (knowledge, information, expertise, budget, products, support, etc.) or *contacts* in response to as many requests as possible. These contributions are written on other sticky notes (another colour), along with the name of the person who wrote it to make connecting later easier. Each response is posted on the board below the relevant request.
- + Step 4: Each person verbally explains his or her contributions to the requests posted. To highlight the density of the network created, this person may also draw a line from his or her name towards the name of the person helped by the contribution. (Note: this is why the circle mentioned in step 1 is useful).
- + Step 5: After everybody has had time to explain their contributions, provide time for the people who made the request to connect with those who can help.
- + Step 6: You can do another round if needed or wanted. A session with just one round usually lasts 1.5 hours, with two rounds roughly 2.5 hours.

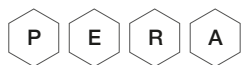
4.4

POSITIVE MANAGEMENT

Managers are the direct leaders most people in organisations deal with in their daily work. It is therefore no surprise that the relationships employees hold with their managers is one of the strongest predictors of their engagement, as is senior management's interest in the well-being of their employees.^{61, 62} It is important to realise that most people in senior management tend to overestimate engagement levels, since they tend to be more engaged themselves.⁶³ The fact is that most people are not truly engaged with their organisation's mission, although this is slightly better in non-profit organisations.⁶⁴

Before going into what you can do as a manager, there's one thing I'd like to mention first. When Jessica Pryce-Jones interviewed and surveyed thousands of people about what they wanted most from their job, their responses included one big surprise. In their top five wishes they mentioned 'a leader they can respect'.⁶⁵ They didn't ask to be respected. No, they asked instead for a leader they could respect. That is what this next chapter is about, it is about how to manage people in a way that preserves respect, is optimistic about the future and engages people in the work they're doing.

Technique 1: Build Strengths-based Teams



As I've mentioned before, there are no top teams on this planet that do not use their strengths. Where most managers are inclined to work with gap analysis models to reach optimum performance levels, and therefore spend their time focused on deficit gaps, most elite sport coaches spend most of their time focused on utilising the abundance gaps. Here are some techniques to incorporate the same thinking into your own team.

1 Spot Strengths. The first thing to do as a manager is change your perspective: from learning to spot deficits in people's performances to spotting unique strengths in the people you lead. I invite you to write down the names of all the members in your team and write down the 3–5 signature strengths you see in each of them. In doing so, please remember that strengths have two separate parts that need to overlap: passion and performance. Your list can be useful input for the next cycle of performance meetings (or team meetings, if you like) you will have with your team, where you can aim to align your vision with the vision of the others. For these meetings to be successful, ask the team to prepare a list of strengths they see in themselves beforehand (following Technique 9 in Chapter 3 of this book).

If you find spotting strengths difficult, I suggest having a look at Alex Linley's Top Ten Strengthspotting Tips, which is available online. Alex is the author of a number of book on strengths,⁶⁶ and is CEO of Capp, a company whose mission statement is 'strengthening the world'.

2 Map Strengths. Once you have aligned your vision of the individual strengths in the team with all team members, you can progress to the team level: mapping the team strengths on a 2 x 2 matrix. An example of the matrix is shown in Figure 21, where one axis compares head to heart and another axis compares focus on self to focus on others. You're free to choose different axes.⁶⁷

The benefits to the team are:

- + The team can become aware of existing strengths, and the beliefs people hold about them, in the team.
- + The team can become aware of the strengths they lack and where development opportunities can be found.
- + This matrix can form the basis for future steps for how the team can best work together.

This session can be beautiful, and should therefore not be taken lightly. I recommend scheduling at least 3 hours for this meeting, ideally with a team dinner afterwards.

3 Initiate Strengths-based Rituals. Once the existing strengths at both the individual and team level are identified, a useful next step is to identify individual strengths-based rituals for the further development of team members, and in the end, the team. These rituals serve a number of purposes:

- + They help develop the individual team members further in a way that energises them.
- + They help develop the team further by utilising, and developing, existing strengths more.
- + They are usually highly positive and energising for the team, and can therefore facilitate team bonding.

A strengths-based ritual is a repeated action — based on both passion and performance strengths — that helps develop a certain strength further. The action should lie on the border of the comfort zone, so that the individual can use his or her strengths, but it should also be creative so that the strength can be used in new ways.

Designing good rituals is not always an easy task, and will take some time. In the end, the design should be shared with the manager and the team, and should be exciting for the person who will execute it (double check with ‘how energised do you feel about pursuing this on a scale of 1–10? If the answer is below 8, re-design). Here are some great examples I’ve seen:

- + Strength: love of learning → make the person responsible for the development of new material in the organisation, which includes 60 minutes of learning time per two days (ideal in start-ups, for example).
- + Strength: gratitude → make the person responsible for gratitude in the team by leading meditation sessions and ‘checking out’ with the team on Friday afternoons in a fun way (ideal in environments where teamwork is key).
- + Strength: positive relationships → individual can lead the improvement of customer satisfaction indicators in the team, helping other team members (customer service specific).
- + Strength: confidence, courage → individual trains on one-on-one actions more to defeat the direct opponent (soccer specific).
- + Strength: efficiency → individual can lead ‘average handling time’ improvement group in order to help team members be more efficient in their calls (customer service specific).

4 Know Hot Buttons. Next to knowing the strengths of your team members, it can also make sense to address the opposite topic: hot buttons. As Daniel Goleman said in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1996), there is a risk when we become too emotional: we may go on the defensive and in that state won’t be open to new information. This state of defensiveness is also called the ‘amygdala hijack’, where the part of our brain central to our emotional

functioning and fear (called the amygdala) takes control over the pre-frontal cortex, which deals with abstract thinking and thought analysis.

In order to prevent amygdala hijacks in teams, a great exercise is to write down, and discuss, personal 'hot buttons' that people have. A hot button is something that triggers you to go into defence mode. I have seen this technique work wonders for teams. A suggestion is to discuss this in two forms, energisers and hot buttons, during a team dinner.

DEEPEN YOUR INSIGHT

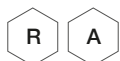
The Amygdala Hijack explained

The amygdala are two almond-shaped (amygdala comes from the Latin for almond) structures in a central area on each side of the brain, deep within the temporal lobes, and respond to highly emotional events. The amygdala is involved in much of our emotional functioning and other related processes, such as learning, memory, aggression and sexual orientation. It exerts its function through the so-called HPA axis (hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands), through which it also influences hormonal functions in our body. There seems to be an inverse relation between amygdala activity and activity in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex,⁶⁸ which is mostly involved in self-regulation and inhibition of emotional responses.

In essence, an amygdala hijack is a defensive, emotional reaction that can lead to bad consequences. Some famous amygdala hijacks that you may remember from sport include:

- + Zinedine Zidane's head-butt on Materazzi in the World Cup finals (2006). France lost the World Cup afterwards.
- + Sergio Garcia, the golf player who threw his golf club in the lake after hitting a ball badly. This is risky for golfers, who can then be seen by competitors as mentally 'weak'.
- + Mike Tyson biting Evander Holyfield's ear in their title match in 1993. The bite proved expensive: US\$3 million and a loss of Tyson's boxing licence.

Technique 2: Build Character through Feedback



Feedback is a crucial tool to help teams improve their performance and well-being (for more info on this, see Technique 6 in the last chapter, Create Positive Networks). New research shows that this effect is even stronger when the team has set aside time for ‘guided reflexivity’, where they can reflect on all the feedback in order to design the next steps.⁶⁹

Here are a few tips to standardise good ways of giving feedback in teams over time:

1 Positive Feedback Rounds. High-performing teams need moments of reflection in order to keep performing at a high level.⁷⁰ When teams are in the ‘dance’ — as Ronald Heifetz, founder of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School, calls it — they are absorbed by all their daily activities. Therefore, teams need to find time to move to the ‘balcony’ at times, to reflect on what they’re doing and whether they’re moving in the right direction.

In my experience, teams need this a minimum of four times a year. For most management teams, this corresponds to one meeting away from the workplace (an off-site) every quarter. In such an off-site, be sure to include a feedback round where all team members are addressed. Here are three ways to run it (more details about the execution of each of these techniques can be found on page xx).

- + Ring of Fire, where you provide one minute of feedback to all team members.
- + Contribution Cards, where you provide feedback through special cards for all team members.
- + Flower Shower, which is similar to Contribution Cards, but focused on a specific period and thankfulness.

Let me give a word of warning here, based on what I have experienced with clients so far. When managers choose to implement a new, pos-

itive and strengths-based tool to provide feedback to team members, it is necessary to also adjust the feedback/evaluation tool the team already uses. If you don't, people will start to doubt the intentions of the approach. The way to do this is relatively simple: as the focus during feedback meetings is now on strengths as much as weaknesses, both have to show up in the feedback/evaluation tool in equal amounts. In practice, it means adding a few questions to the surveys used in the feedback/evaluation tool, to give more attention to strengths.

2 Deliver Negative Feedback Positively. There is another aspect to managing people that should be mentioned, and that is how to deal with negative deviance in your team. The answer is relatively simple in theory: it works best when you're completely honest and congruent with your message.

The reason why this is so important are the possible reactions you might get when delivering negative feedback. For example, people may react defensively when they feel threatened or put down. When this happens, self-protection becomes more important than the content of your message (meant to help the person grow). During my consultancy years, we used to describe the reaction to feedback as either 'below the line' (defensive), or 'above the line' (open to it). It is important to realise that defensiveness can take many forms: people can become withdrawn and avoid you, or try to boost themselves by being more aggressive. Both are ways to protect their self-image.

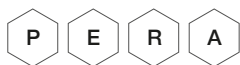
Here are some principles to stick to when delivering negative feedback:

- + Be honest and direct, don't beat around the bush.
- + Discuss the person's behaviour, not their personality.
- + Separate facts from your opinions.
- + Ask as much as you tell, and ask questions first.
- + Aspire to find common ground in the end.

Here is the logic that I normally use within teams to structure feedback. The essence of the model is that you separate the facts from your feelings about those facts.

1. *Facts*: describe actual facts that occurred, ideally on a behavioural level. For example, ‘I noticed that you sent an e-mail to the client’s CEO directly...’
2. *Feelings*: describe what you felt when that happened, without judging. For example, ‘That made me feel uncomfortable...’
3. *Silence*: Allow the other person to speak.
4. *Solutions*: If you understand each other, it’s time to look for common ground, and possible solutions. Do this together, so you can design future behaviours that will work better. For example, ‘So, how do you think we could make this work in the future?’

Technique 3: Set Everest Goals for Your Team



People are more inspired by SMART Everest Goals than by any other goals. Everest Goals are characterised by the fact that they’re worth pursuing for their own sake, are radically optimistic, aimed at creating something rather than avoiding something, and they provide people with positive energy.

1 Set Personal Everest Goals. Although having goals in life can be beneficial to both our well-being and our performance, the number of people who report clear goals at the moment is probably low. I wasn’t able to find data on what percentage of the population sets clear goals for themselves,⁷¹ but I believe the number to be quite low based on the workshops I have facilitated on the topic. Setting a goal that you truly value, however, can be a powerful thing to do. I personally use the technique when preparing for a mountain: I first plan the mountain in my diary, then book the flight tickets, and then break the preparation down into all the necessary components. The joy (and sometimes fear) of anticipation happens as soon as I’ve booked the trip. Here are some questions to help you think about Everest Goals for you personally, this can be useful before you ask your team members to do the same:

- + What do you consider an inherently valuable accomplishment — even if it did not represent any monetary value?

- + Who do you consider to be your heroes? Why?
- + What do you want people to say about you after you have died?
- + In the area that you care about most, what would ‘flourishing’ look like?

When you have defined a clear goal for yourself — or possibly multiple goals — it can be powerful to share it — them — with your team members. This provides a good opportunity to open up, and gives them a chance to help you if they can.

2 Align Everest Goals. Once you, and your team members have Everest Goals for themselves, it’s useful to see if they can be linked to the organisation’s goals. Alfred Tolle, currently the director of large customer sales at Google in Dublin and former CEO of Lycos (and someone I consider a close friend in the field), told me how they cover this process at Google. In his exact words:

‘In terms of results, innovation and creativity, it helps when you give [team members] purpose. In this industry, you see that people are waking up. They realise they will need other ways to find great people; not only to keep existing people, but also to get the best people out of the market. So, at Google, we work together with them to help them set their career goals, and align them with those of Google. There are different processes we offer, some happen in workshops and training sessions, but the one I prefer is actually pretty easy. It involves a simple mind map where the person makes a node for personal goals and values, and connects those to another node with professional goals and values. This is discussed with family members and friends, and goals are then put on a timeline.’

Another great perspective came from Morten Isachsen, current CEO of Tom Wood:

‘The most important thing any leader can do is make employees want to be part of your journey. Making employees want to deliver what you are hired to do yourself. We said in my former company that we want

to make our clients rock stars. If we make our clients rock stars, we'll be rock stars as well.'

Purpose, and corresponding Everest Goals, are also at the core of the culture at NextJump, as I found out in a recent interview with Elise Pierpont, head of branding there:

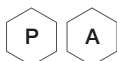
'It's about creating an environment where people can grow and better themselves. The way we look at purpose is twofold: one, we want your people to "give back" in their area of expertise on a regular basis, and two, we also allow NextJumpers to support a non-profit that they are passionate about in a project called Code for a Cause, where our engineers help their non-profit for 2 weeks. We call this the Better Me + Better You = Better Us formula. It's about impact on the world.'

In short, a talk on aligning personal Everest Goals with those of the company is highly valuable. It may well lead people to move in certain directions as opposed to others, in order to truly deliver what they want to deliver in life.

3 Dream Machine. A last exercise underlying Everest Goals is a very personal one in teams, and it was recently invented by Jack Hubbard (Propellernet). The technique is simple, but highly engaging. Each member of the team writes down three things in life that he/she would love to experience or achieve (e.g. 'race in a Ferrari', 'do 50 push-ups in one go'). The goals go into eggs, like the ones normally found in bubble-gum vending machines, so that they cannot be read from the outside.

The next step is to actually find a bubble-gum machine (they can be bought on EBay for anywhere from \$11–\$100), and put the eggs inside. Every few months, or when there is a celebration, one person is allowed to get one egg out. The dream inside that particular ball will be made a reality by the team.

Technique 4: Highlight Abundance Gaps



We can look at the world from multiple angles. One angle is to highlight the deficit gaps, while another is to highlight abundance gaps. I believe the second angle to be at least as important as the first when it comes to managing people effectively.

1 Celebrate Positive Deviance. In the technique Capitalise on the Good, I explained the value of celebrating our accomplishments, however small they may be. Celebration can strengthen team bonding and the sense of success, and both are crucial for the future success of the team.

So, the next time you evaluate your team performance, dare to truly highlight everything that went well (regardless of the circumstances). Highlight the green KPIs (key performance indicators), the things the team learned and the great moments the team has created.

2 Create Ownership. Once certain areas of abundance are clear in the team, it can be useful to pinpoint owners per area of abundance, in order to build on them further. This approach is close to the strengths-based approach mentioned earlier; it involves putting people in areas that truly match their energy and attention.

There can be many areas of abundance in the team: someone might be able to create a comfortable and inspiring team room, another might perform well on certain performance indicators, or show exceptional quality when it comes to motivating those around them. Whatever the area of abundance is, it usually makes sense for the team to strengthen it further. Appointing owners for each area of abundance is the perfect way to spread leadership throughout the team.

Technique 5: Co-design the Future



A recent article by Fast Company described the CEO of the future as ‘designer-in-chief’. The article, based on the 2015 Wolff Olins Leadership Report, describes the transformation the CEO role has undergone: from a fearsome whip-cracker a century ago, to a motivator dangling corporate incentives in the last decades, to a master designer inspiring others to build the next great innovation. CEOs, in this report, showed a strong interest in building the right ‘uncorporate’ culture, experimenting on many fronts with small teams and creating a shared social purpose in order to motivate people.

However, what the article fails to mention is that this trend, where design thinking is the new way to go, also extends to employees. Most organisations want their employees to think along, to experiment, and to be more entrepreneurial.⁷² Where old organisations still work with tiny ‘business development’ groups, newer organisations tend to mimic the start-up vibe by training more people in design thinking and entrepreneurship. Here is a way to do this with your team:

Plan Design Meetings. When something new is about to happen — a new leadership structure, new organisational values, a new strategy, or new ways of working together in the team — invite your team for a meeting about it. Realise that the old top-down approach of delivering the message (where you’d tell the story, and then categorise employees as either embracing the story, or resisting it, based on how they take it) is over. This is a time where people love to build the story together with you. These teams work best when they combine phases of diversion (searching for new information, discussions) with phases of coming together, comparable to how bees function in a beehive.⁷³ Here is how to approach such a meeting:

- + At the beginning of the meeting, be completely honest with your intentions and goals. Explain what aspects of the future design cannot be changed. This helps to clarify the ‘playground’ for the team.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Becoming invincible

In the 2013–2014 season, I served as the sport psychologist for a field hockey team in the Netherlands, called HC Bloemendaal. The team had lost some of their best players to retirement, and realised they had to build a new team for the future. They asked for my help in that process.

In the first half of the season, the team showed great inconsistency. We combined moments of brilliance with moments of poor play and focus, and it was clear the team needed to learn some basics when it came to defining the right culture. Our goal was to end in the top 4 (since that would put us in the play-offs at the end of the season), but we only managed to be 7th by half way. This led to some difficult meetings with the financial director of the club, who explained that he was severely unhappy with the situation, and was losing faith in the head coach and me. So, we needed to find a solution.

Both the coach and I felt that there was a lot to improve in the team's culture, and discussed how to best approach this with the team. In the end, we came up with five values for the team to live and die by, which we crosschecked with other great cultures (Navy Seals, Manchester United) to check the validity of what we had made. Then came the real work: we hosted a meeting with the entire team. The coach did the kick-off and explained that we were in the game 'to build the best team in the world, and nothing else.' He then explained the values we had designed together. After his speech, I instructed the team to design the actual behavioural agreements (written down in FROM and TO form) that they would adhere to. When they were done, the list included things like, 'If you're late, the whole team does 30 push-ups while you watch', and, 'If you talk negatively about the team to the outside world, you're out'.

The intervention proved powerful: after the winter break the team didn't lose a single game until the finals, which unfortunately they lost against the team that had been on top the whole season. We acquired 1.7 points per game before the winter break, but managed to win 2.7 points on average after it.

- + Align first with the team on what the ideal outcome of the meeting should be ('a great culture within the team', 'more sales'), in order to make sure everybody is on board.
- + When the purpose of the meeting is clear, ask the team to provide answers to some key questions that you had previously prepared. Ideally, there are a few questions that need attention, and you have given them some serious thought before you enter the meeting. Allow the team to move into parallel break-outs (smaller teams, separate rooms) where they come up with their best solutions to one single question at a time.
- + Let the teams present their ideas when they come back. Listeners may circle the best parts of the stories on the flip chart to synthesise the findings directly.
- + End with some clear agreements, where you again align with the team and thank them for their cooperation.

It goes without saying that when teams co-design the best possible way of working together with you, their chances of being disengaged, or resistant, are much smaller. It improves ownership, and utilises the collective IQ of the team.

Technique 6: Coach through Appreciative Inquiry



As a manager, one of your prime responsibilities is to help people to grow. This challenge can be approached in many ways, and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a way that has shown to be both beautiful and effective.

This technique is in essence a tool to create positive strategic change, either within people or within organisations as a whole. It has become so popular that I have met several organisational experts who know about AI, even though they had never heard about positive psychology.

The key to the technique is in the name: appreciation (the act of recognising the best in people or the world around us, affirming past or present strengths) and inquiry (the act of exploration and discovery).⁷⁴ The essence of AI is very close to the essence of positive psychology in that it aims to find what is ‘life giving’ rather than problematic or painful at this moment, to focus on what works, rather than to fix what doesn’t. The technique is the opposite of the classic problem-solving approach of dealing with problems.⁷⁵

Problem solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Felt need, identification of problems	Appreciating – valuing the best of what is
Analysis of causes	Envisioning what might be
Analysis of possible solutions	Engaging in dialogue about what should be
Action planning	Innovating what will be

Table 10: Problem solving compared to Appreciative Inquiry

The AI process works through the so-called 4-D model, with four consecutive steps in the process. It can be used at a personal level (coaching), or in organisational transformations as guiding principles for the process.

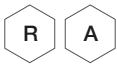
1. *Discover*: a collective search for everything that is good and working well within the organisation, or the person. This is a search for energy, for what is ‘giving life’. For example: ‘What do you love most about...?’, ‘What has inspired you in ...?’
2. *Dream*: a collective search for what could be. Envisioning the best possible future. For example: ‘If you imagine this organisation in a flourishing state, what would it look like?’, ‘What could it be like?’
3. *Design*: a collective search for what it should be. Designing the things that should be part of the dream, once realised. For example:

‘What are the areas that we should improve, in your view?’, ‘How would you do it if you were managing this place?’, ‘What roles would everyone play?’

4. *Destiny*: a collective search for how best to implement the thoughts so far. Focuses especially on personal, or organisational, commitments. For example: ‘How can we take this forward?’, ‘Who will do what?’

Plan Regular Coaching. Relationships are the cement of any organisation, and what better way to build them than to consciously choose to help the people around you. With AI, you don’t have to be an expert yourself in a particular field to help those around you. I recommend having at least one coaching session with every person in your team every three months.

Technique 7: Listen Up



Teams perform better when they find time for reflection.⁷⁶ When teams reflect, there is more time for double loop learning,⁷⁷ where learning takes place on multiple levels to improve current strategies and techniques and the underlying assumptions we hold to be true.

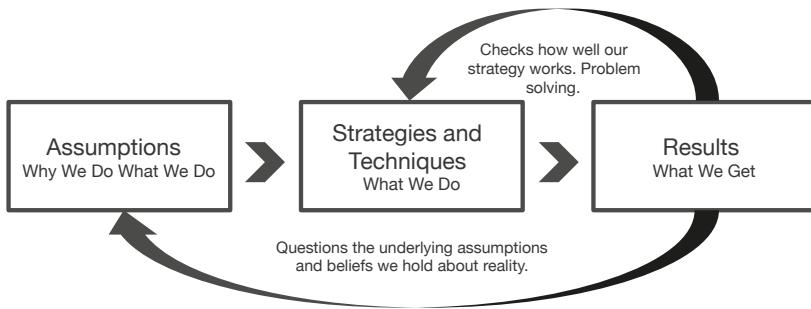


Figure 30 Double loop learning: where teams, and organisations, can learn more by reflecting regularly on what they wanted to do in the first place

As the graph shows, the essence of double loop learning is asking the right questions to check if you're still on track to achieve the things you set out to do. For this, relaxation and reflection is needed. Here are two techniques to build this into the daily habits of your team:⁷⁸

1 Check-in. When meetings start, don't jump into the content right away. Spend five minutes on how people are doing and what's keeping them busy. Here are some questions you can use:

- + How do you feel?
- + Is there anything that could distract you from being here?
- + What do you hope to get out of this meeting?

Especially when it comes to showing feelings, it's important to start the check-in yourself. You'll find that people will mirror your depth, and length, of the check-in.

2 Check-out. A similar thing can be done when people leave. Since our memory remembers things that either stand out or happen at the end,⁷⁹ and we can better let go of things once they are completed,⁸⁰ it can make sense to check-out with people as well. We usually do this at the end of the week and in long meetings, to see if people achieved the goals they set for themselves.

4.5

POSITIVE TEAM MEMBERSHIP

When it comes to building positive organisations, the role of leadership and management should not be underestimated. It is no wonder that most organisational transformation programmes start at the top of the pyramid. However, and especially in today's work environment in Europe and the US, employees can definitely affect their own work environment — and sometimes even the nature of their jobs. This belief has led some organisations to work with 'inverted pyramids',⁸¹ where hierarchy is reversed and the leaders serve the employees (who in turn serve the customers). Others have focused on giving employees more

DEEPEN YOUR INSIGHT

Self-management in organisations

Ricardo Semler, the current CEO of Semco Partners, is well known for his industrial democracy, and the fact that he transformed his company from an organisation with just US\$4 million in revenue, to over US\$200 million through this method. He is widely known to have a relatively simple – but positively different – philosophy of management: he truly cares about the happiness of his employees, and gives them freedom to make their own decisions. A third of Semco employees decide on their own salaries, and everybody decides how they spend their work time.

Semco – although highlighted by the media – is not the only company moving in this direction. When I worked with a client recently to come up with new, and more positive principles for their leadership model, my team found a few more examples of positive deviance:

Morning Star: produces 40% of the tomato purée in the US. It has teams that steer themselves, and every employee has a personal mission statement, outlining how they contribute to organisational targets. This is checked only with colleagues through a CLOU (colleague letter of understanding). Hierarchy doesn't exist, only members of the same team. Needed to succeed: completely transparent data at all levels and good conflict resolution tools.

IDEO: design and consultancy firm. Everything is about helping others, and helping behaviour is shown in social network analyses. 'Going out of your way to help others is the secret sauce.' Helper is a formal role in the company. Needed: empty diaries for some people and people who dare to ask for help.

AES: energy firm. Relies strongly on the Joy at Work management method.⁸² Employees ask for advice from their direct colleagues, and can make most decisions through this method in 'taskforces',

even their salary levels. People work to the Pareto principle (80/20), where they spend 20% of their time on decisions in taskforces that transcend their own jobs. Needed: strong culture fit when hiring, mechanisms for conflict resolution and transparent data.

room to manoeuvre (notably Semco, and Morning Star). The focus in these organisations has been on giving trust to employees to make their own decisions, with self-management as the guiding principle.

The essence of positive team membership is simple: it's called 'job crafting'. Job crafting is re-designing your job in ways that foster job satisfaction, engagement, pleasure or meaning within the job.⁸³ Job crafting can be done in many ways, for example, by literally changing what, or how frequently, an employee is involved in certain tasks (task crafting). It can, however, also be more subtle, where employees change their relationships with fellow employees by changing the way they do things (involve more people, called relational crafting), or where they change the inherent cognitive appraisal of the job in order to change how they perceive the tasks (cognitive crafting).⁸⁴ This last example — showing that, regardless of where we work, we can hold different perceptions of our jobs, was demonstrated clearly by Amy Wrzesniewski and her colleagues,⁸⁵ who showed that people tend to see their jobs as one of the following:⁸⁶

Job	A focus on financial awards and necessity rather than pleasure or fulfilment. Not a major positive part of life. Only interested in the material benefits from work.
Career	Focus on advancing within the occupational structure. Deeper personal investment in work. Advancing brings higher social status and self-esteem for the worker.
Calling	See work as inseparable from life. Works not for financial gain, but focuses mainly on the fulfilment the job brings.

Table 11: Three perspectives on work

Crafting a job then, is meant to help employees get more out of their work. It works top-down, where managers craft the jobs for their employees, but it also works bottom-up, where employees engage in job crafting themselves. This section is about the latter.

Technique 1: Clarify Purpose



As stated in the PERMA model by Seligman, described earlier, contributing to something meaningful in life is central to our well-being. Research by Jessica Pryce-Jones of iOpener suggests this is also true at work: whether you believe you ‘contribute’ at work is probably the most important factor in determining happiness at work.⁸⁷

So what can make work meaningful? We have seen this question triggering a wide range of responses, and most people find it a hard question to answer. However, although different people find meaning in different things, there are some general trends. We often do exercises with groups of people to discover what they truly consider to be meaningful in life; here’s what we hear a lot:

- + Positive impact on clients, improve their lives.
- + Positive impact on the company itself, and everybody in it.
- + Positive impact on the planet.

Whatever your answer is, what matters most is how you structure your job so that you can contribute positively to the cause you deeply care about. If you succeed in doing that, you’ll be a big step further on the way to being happy at work. Here are two exercises to use when you are crafting a meaningful job for yourself:

1 Craft Your Story. In the How to Flourish chapter of this book, I wrote about Meaning Maker Stories, based on three questions. This story is relevant to you as a person, but equally relevant to you as an employee. The questions to answer are below. It can be helpful to picture them in circles so you can find an overlap between your answers.

- + What gives me pleasure?
- + What gives me meaning?
- + What are my unique strengths in life?

This exercise is useful as it clarifies your needs. If you can clarify what you truly care about in work, or private life for that matter, the conversation with your manager about job crafting becomes much easier.

2 Decide on Non-negotiables. Once you have your own story ready, a next step is to decide what you're satisfied with in your job, and what you'd like to change. Remember that change is possible on many levels (task crafting, relational crafting, cognitive crafting).⁸⁸

In this list of changes, some things will likely be more important than others, depending on how close they are to your 'core' as a human

EXPERIENCE

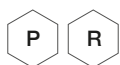
Non-negotiables in daily practice

When I joined McKinsey & Company, my main fear was that it would ruin my exercise habits. I valued my exercise habits tremendously, and felt that it was such an elementary part of my life that I was not prepared to give up on them. Exercise represented something bigger for me; living my full potential, and that meant facing physical challenges like mountaineering as well.

In my first job interviews at McKinsey, I expressed this concern clearly, and was very surprised to learn that this was not seen as a problem at all. Instead, they appreciated the clarity on the matter. I didn't care much about the salary, the exact car I would get, or most of the other things, but regular exercise was, and still is, a non-negotiable for me. In the end, we agreed on an approach. Looking back, I trained roughly 3–4 times a week in my time at the firm, and climbed Kilimanjaro and Elbrus in the process.

being. You can divide your list of changes into two categories: what you're willing to discuss (negotiables), and what you really need in order to flourish (non-negotiables). This list is perfect for when you talk with your manager, who can then decide, based on your clear story, what can be done to build the best possible job for you, from which both parties will benefit. One tip: make sure you have something you're willing to negotiate about, it is risky to only have a list with non-negotiables since you may appear inflexible.

Technique 2: Build Energising Networks



Positive energy spreads in networks because our emotions are highly contagious.⁸⁹ This is also true on a larger scale, where emotional states like happiness and loneliness spread in networks, up to three degrees of separation. When we become happy, the chance that a close friend becomes happy is 15% higher (one degree of separation), but the effect extends to friends of our friends (10%), and even friends of our friends' friends (6%).⁹⁰ Effects beyond this point haven't been found. This finding has been summarised as the Three Degrees of Influence rule, and applies to other social behaviours (smoking, obesity, political views) as well. Fowler and Christakis, the best known researchers in this field, have even found effects of contagion for things that we mostly believe are fully within our control: how we vote, how many sexual partners we have, even how much back pain we experience. The effects are even stronger when you're leading others. Leaders seem more emotionally 'contagious' than others and can influence the people around them even more.⁹¹

The fact that our networks affect our (un)happiness was recently tested by Facebook in a study that received some fierce criticism. The massive study, with over 689,000 Facebook users, tested whether reducing the number of positive messages people saw made them less likely to post positive content themselves. Through intentional manipulation of their news feed, the study found that emotional contagion can indeed occur

in large networks. People can become happier, or less happy, depending on what they see in their online communication. Simply being exposed to a friend who expresses an emotion is sufficient. The study further shows that this process happens without the user being consciously aware of it.⁹²

What are we to make of this information, are we to stay happy ourselves? Two things I believe: first of all, we need to learn to surround ourselves with the right people, since they will affect us. Second, we have to realise that — especially when we lead others or when they look to us for guidance — we can affect their well-being. This section looks at how you can do both in the best possible way.

1 Start at Home. The value of positive relationships has been mentioned time and again in this book, and it may well be one of the most central constructs in our happiness research today. The core of the matter is still simple: what matters most is the quality of the intimate relationships we have.⁹³ Therefore, it makes sense to start at home, and start with yourself. Exercises to do regularly at home to strengthen relationships are Daily Appreciation (e.g. with your kids, spouse, family), Loving Kindness Meditation, Compassion Meditation, Random Acts of Kindness (surprise people you love), Active Constructive Responding and Build Love Maps (with your partner). All these are described in detail in the chapter on Personal Flourishing.

2 Build a Self-Aware Team. As a team member, you play a huge role in the functioning of your team. As most psychologists — and sports coaches — will tell you, one individual can make or break a team. Alex Ferguson, manager of Manchester United from 1986–2013, and one of the most successful football managers in history, was famous for excluding players from his team when they were destroying the atmosphere, regardless of how well they could play. He was well aware of the power of a single individual when it comes to building the right culture.⁹⁴

Most teams I meet are only partly aware of how well they do when it comes to well-being, and most team members seem to be only partially

aware of the role they can play in this matter. I have seen many reasons for this: sometimes organisations have cultures where discussing such matters is frowned upon, sometimes team members feel that difficulties from the past get in the way of open discussions, and sometimes teams believe that creating a great atmosphere is the task of their manager — or even the organisation itself. It has been my experience, however, that having open discussions on the topic can mean a lot for teams, and that individual team members are able to change the atmosphere for the better when they choose to.

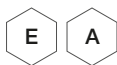
Paying attention to the topic alone can do wonders. The classic example of the placebo effect, well documented and studied across the globe, underscores this notion. When depressed patients took placebo medicine for 6–8 weeks, 79% recovered. The difference, however significant, to the group that took the real antidepressants was relatively small: in this group 93% of the patients recovered.⁹⁵ Although this is by no means an argument to treat people with placebos instead, it demonstrates the power of the mind.

Building self-awareness in teams — to recognise how well the team is doing — can be done in many ways. When I worked as a consultant, I remember receiving a little graph every month or so, showing how well all the teams were doing. The graph was based on a few questions we answered using a simple IT tool. If preferred, this tool can be used with just two dimensions for clarity: well-being (assessed through one of the short surveys mentioned in chapter 2.1 of this book, ideally within a minute) and performance (a composite measure of existing KPIs for the company). Another option is to use Kim Cameron's Positive Energy measurement, which he explains in more detail in his book *Practicing Positive Leadership*.⁹⁶ Another, even easier, way is to simply have a flip chart in the room, and everybody who enters in the morning draws a simple face (happy smiley, sad smiley, etc.) indicating how they feel. However small this may seem, it can open up a lot of discussion on a topic otherwise closed to many teams, and I have seen this work extremely well.

3 Find Energisers at Work. As mentioned before in the chapter on Personal Flourishing, we often use a technique called the Relationship Map to get insight into how well people are currently connected with people that energise them. You can also use the same technique for yourself.

The exercise here is as follows. First, draw your own network map, but focus specifically on your work environment (review the technique Find Energisers for the full instructions). Once you're done, feel free to discuss it with someone at home to get a fresh perspective on it. Then, use the network map to help you make choices: how can you strengthen relationships with the energisers around you? And how can you make sure you suffer less from energy drainage in your team or organisation?

Technique 3: Develop Strengths in New Ways



Using your strengths more can help you be genuine and authentic in your job. It is especially when you can find room to use your strengths in new ways that they can help to develop your well-being, self-confidence and energy levels at work.⁹⁷ Ideally, your boss works with a strengths-based approach, but the chances are this is not happening as much as it should. Around 70% of the American workforce still suffers from a lack of engagement — costing the US economy between \$450 and \$550 billion in lost productivity per year⁹⁸ — and it's a similar story in most other (Western) countries, so the chances are that you're one of them. However, the people in this same dataset who reported that they were using their strengths, showed a six times higher chance of being engaged at work. Here is how to spice up your working life using the strengths-based approach.

1 Ask Colleagues for Strengths-based Feedback. More about this technique, and the e-mail to use for this, can be found in the Build on Strengths technique in the How to Flourish chapter. I highly recom-

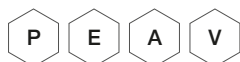
mend working with your colleagues on this technique since it's likely you'll receive different feedback from those you work with regularly.

2 Install Strengths-based Rituals. Design, together with a coach or your manager, or alone if you prefer, some ways to develop your strengths further. There are two ways to think about this: either do more of what you love and are good at, or use the underlying strengths in new settings. When you choose to do more of what you're already good at, you may well want to have a conversation with others in your team, including your manager, so they know what your wishes are. When you choose to use underlying strengths in new settings, the story can be a bit more complex and you may have to be a bit more creative. You can either choose to use your strengths in completely new ways, or use them to overcome existing weaknesses (in either your skills, or that of the team you work in). Here are some examples to help you consider this further:

- + Use the underlying strength 'capacity to love' to overcome weaknesses in public speaking, or public appearances, by making sure — and focusing on the fact that — your audience has the best possible experience.
- + Use the underlying strength 'persistence' to overcome gaps in knowledge you may have on a topic by planning a rigorous education regime for yourself, or the team.
- + Use the underlying strength 'love of learning' to take on a new role in the team to be the 'information officer', responsible for updating the team on new developments in the market.
- + Use the underlying strength of 'compassion' to take on a new role of 'compassion officer' when there are difficulties in the team, where you help ensure team members consider all perspectives.
- + Use the underlying strength of 'humour' to lighten difficult business meetings.

I have personally seen people flourish through this exercise, especially when they were courageous enough to choose rituals that they found slightly scary. It's simply a great method for self-development.

Technique 4: Exercise



Energy and happiness are strongly related, with the happiest people feeling a stunning 180% more energised at work than the least happy people.⁹⁹ Therefore, a great strategy to build happiness at work is to target your energy level directly.

When working to enhance energy in your life, it's best to design specific rituals, energy givers, that will give you long-term benefits. The way to approach this is mentioned in more detail in the *How to Flourish* chapter, but the essence is to find rituals that are both effective and highly rewarding at the same time. I once conducted a survey in a company where I asked everyone to send me details of the energising rituals they did during the day, and there were many strange rituals. Some just went for a run, or yoga session, others mentioned deliberately bumping into people in the hallway to see what would happen, or doing Muhammad Ali visualisations and exercises in the toilet. Just find whatever works for you.

1 Exercise before Work. One of the best ways is to make morning exercise a habit. It may take a while to get used to — since not everybody is a morning person¹⁰⁰ — but you can get into the rhythm over time. Different types of exercise have different effects on the body (see *High Intensity Training*), so a morning ritual is ideally composed of a light warm-up, some stretching and possibly some high intensity strength training (after you've warmed up, of course). Cardio training is also recommended, but not for too long, since its effects on the body and mind may cause you to be less sharp during the day.

2 Exercise during Work. With the 'wearables' hype these days, it's not difficult to find tools to track how much you move during the day. These tools will give you an insight into the number of steps you take, the calories you burn while doing so, the distance you cover and the quality of your sleep. They usually come with software designed to give

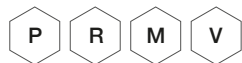
you a quick overview of what you've been doing over the course of the week. Here are a few of the best ones:

- + Jawbone.
- + Fitbit.
- + Samsung Gear (for use with Samsung phones).
- + Nike+ Fuelband.
- + Microsoft Band.

The trick, once you're wearing these tools, is to move as much as you can. Remember the slogan 'sitting is the new smoking,' and find ways to move during the day. Some tricks that I've seen to work:

- + Sit far away from the bin or the coffee machine so you have to walk a little farther.
- + Always bring your exercise gear to work, so you can train in the lunch hour.
- + Always use the stairs.
- + Make your conference calls while walking outside when you can (walking meetings).
- + Have your sandwich while walking (walking lunch). Note that this is not bad for your digestion, as some people seem to believe. Your body is perfectly able to digest while you walk.
- + Game-ify moving in your team, where having the highest number of steps is rewarded, with a symbol, for example (badging).
- + Create a 'vitality team' with a little budget: this is a team responsible for vitality initiatives in the organisation or the team.

Technique 5: Be Grateful



What is it in your work that makes you feel grateful? Take a moment to reflect on the question. If you have difficulty answering it, you're not alone. Gratitude is undervalued in our ever faster paced society, and few people consciously train their gratitude levels. In addition, few people link gratitude to their jobs.

Robert Emmons, who is perhaps the world's leading gratitude expert, highlighted once again in a recent article that gratitude practice can lead to stronger immune systems, less suffering from aches and pains, higher levels of positive emotions, more energy in life, and a more forgiving and outgoing view of relationships.¹⁰¹ The notion of gratitude has two parts: firstly, it's an affirmation of goodness outside ourselves. Here, we acknowledge that good things indeed exist. Secondly, we attribute that goodness to something, or somebody. Psychologists would call this a causal attribution; we humbly acknowledge that this goodness was provided by other forces than our own.

As I explained in the personal flourishing section, gratitude is something to actively practise. It doesn't come naturally to all of us, but practice can make a big difference. As I mentioned, we can practise it on a personal level with the Three Good Things exercise, but we can also practise so that we experience more gratitude in our daily work. Here are a few ways to do that:

1 Best Things at Work Diary. The Three Good Things or Three Funny Things diaries can also be extended to your working life. Although this may be more difficult at the start, you might find that it can be a valuable exercise to become more aware of the good things at work. Again, this can also be a good topic to discuss over dinner. Dinner is usually a great time for discussions since, for most people, it's when they start to wind down from work and have some real time and attention available.

Let me share a personal note with you: when I joined McKinsey, it felt a little like I was 'trading my time for their money'. This approach, where you essentially dehumanise your employer, didn't help me to feel grateful for the opportunities they were giving me. Only now that there are people who work for me, can I see the situation from the perspective of the employer, and I realise how much effect you can have on people when you provide them with a good way to make a living. Work, in most cases, is something to be grateful for. It often means someone else has faith in you. It can also mean that there is somebody who is willing to take some risks together with you.

2 Practise Naikan. The Naikan method is a little known Japanese meditation method that has many benefits for its practitioners.¹⁰²

Although the technique, developed by a Japanese businessman and Buddhist, has extreme forms where people spend an entire week practising it, the essence is simple and relates to gratitude. Every Naikan practice uses three questions on which the person is asked to reflect:

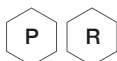
- + What have I received from ... (person X)?
- + What have I given to ... (person X)?
- + What troubles and difficulties have I caused to ... (person X)?

For person X, you could theoretically choose anybody you like. A good option could be to first try to answer the questions for somebody you care for a lot (e.g. a good friend at work, or a former boss that provided you with great opportunities), and later try the same technique with a person you 'like less' at this moment (e.g. a colleague that hurt you in the past).

The technique is surprisingly simple, and mainly highlights the value of the bond we have with other people for which we should be grateful.

3 Use a Visual Reminder. The primary obstacles to feeling grateful are forgetfulness, and a lack of presence in the moment, as each moment unfolds. Therefore, it can be helpful to just be reminded of something you're grateful for. I have seen many examples of this with clients, from pictures of their loved ones on their desks, to stickers on the windows of their cars to remind them of the beauty of life. I personally remind myself of the beauty of life through a breathing technique where I focus on my belly and make my *hara* (the central point of your body, below your navel) warm. This is a gratitude technique I learned from Aikido practice.

Technique 6: Be Kinder than Necessary

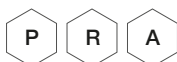


Being on the receiving end of an act of kindness can completely make someone's day, and giving a random act of kindness is the single biggest instant happiness boost we can give others, and ourselves.¹⁰³ In the same way as our happiness spreads to three degrees of separation, so do our acts of kindness: each recipient of an act of kindness tends to be more generous to their direct networks in return, and that network responds positively as well.¹⁰⁴ It is no surprise that the value of kindness is currently taught in some schools, where it benefits levels of kindness and grades.¹⁰⁵

There are a couple of great techniques when it comes to being kinder than necessary. All of the techniques I have mentioned before in this book for this purpose can be used equally well at work, notably: Active Constructive Responding, Random Acts of Kindness, the Secret Good Deed and Coaching through Appreciative Inquiry. I personally believe very strongly in the power of secret good deeds, since the fact that it is not done openly can actually enhance the experience of it, and make it an inherent part of the culture in your team.

Make Someone's Day. Next time you leave for work, consciously commit to something other than your regular job targets: make someone's day. Whatever technique you use for it, just commit to giving one particular person a very good day. Be creative.

Technique 7: Celebrate Openly



Working with athletes on their performance has taught me a lot about the value of celebration. Celebration can help build self-esteem and the feeling of success, and research shows that celebrating openly can contribute to this. Scientists found evidence for this by watching

World Cup and European Championship penalty shootouts. Here they noticed that celebrating a goal more openly (arms up, opening the chest, engaging the crowd) significantly increased the chances of being in the winning team due to the emotional contagion. However, just 16% of the players engaged in this behaviour automatically.¹⁰⁶

Celebration can be linked to pride and self-esteem. In the happiness literature, it is recognised that the concept of self-esteem has a strong link to happiness. A study done by Lyubomirsky and colleagues (2005)¹⁰⁷ confirmed this, showing a strong connection between the two concepts. Self-esteem, which researchers see as a 'global feeling of self-worth or adequacy as a person', is a basic need for people, and when it's not there we become less happy.

Self-esteem, in turn, can be raised in many ways. First of all, having a clear concept of self seems important.¹⁰⁸ Secondly, it is important that we feel competent and in control of the areas in life we care about¹⁰⁹ and attribute our successes to our own actions.¹¹⁰ Celebration can therefore be an important technique when it comes to building self-esteem and happiness.

1 Celebrate Your Success. It never hurts to throw a good party. Most people like parties, so hosting one is not only beneficial to you (acknowledging something you've done well and being happy with it), but also to everyone at the party.

I find it painful to watch the opposite, where clients never celebrate anything at work because 'the culture doesn't really allow it'. In the end, we spend almost half of our lives at work with our colleagues, so we might as well enjoy it.

2 Celebrate Team Success. Since some people tend to feel awkward hosting a party for their own success, it might be easier to host a party for someone else that has done a great job. This can be a great RAK at the same time.

SUCCESS STORIES SO FAR

Since I founded Purpose+ at the end of 2012, many things have happened. The times where we had to convince clients that happiness is a relevant topic appear to be over. Most people, at least in Amsterdam and around, seem to have accepted its importance. The journey has also brought us a lot beautiful stories, emotional experiences and good lessons for the future.

I have shared many stories and cases with friends, and they have wisely asked me to record some of them for later use. Thanks to their suggestion, I can now share some of the ‘expeditions’ we’ve been on so far with clients. I hope these examples will help you: I hope you feel inspired by them, can copy the methods and, where possible, design your own ways of having as much positive impact on the world as you can through similar principles. Please note that what may seem complex at first, can become surprisingly simple once you understand the core logic behind the work. I’m convinced that after reading this book, with the help of these client cases, you’ll be able to start your own ‘happiness accelerator’.

OPEN SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS WORKSHOPS

Training 250 people for cost price to build a fan base

Over the last two years, many people have asked how we came up with the idea for the company and the content for the workshops. They seemed to think that it was a stroke of genius, and use that as an excuse to not try it themselves. I personally do not believe that strokes

of genius are the real secret behind companies, instead it's more about grit.¹ So here's the gritty story of how we really began.

After designing company material at home alone behind a laptop, like so many other entrepreneurs, I felt I had to come up with a way to test my thinking in practice. The strategy to do this — called 'Giving' — was to host around ten open workshops in Amsterdam to see who would turn up and what the effects of those workshops would be on the people attending it. The workshops would be delivered at cost price (around 20 euro per person), so we didn't make any money with this. I gave the first workshops together with my good friend Jaap Duin, who had been a colleague in my sport psychology days.

The first problem we faced was how to name the workshops. What do you call a workshop on happiness when there are so many people, magazines, TV programmes and websites on the topic? We tried a few names: The future of HR; HR2.0; Happiness. In the end, we chose the Science of Happiness because of the (apparent) paradox in the name, and the fact that it clearly showed our line of thinking.

The second problem we faced was how to fill the workshops. We could easily ask the people in our network to show up to the first few, but after that it became increasingly difficult. We tried a Facebook campaign, which partly worked, but only led to rooms filled with female participants (apparently, men don't subscribe to happiness workshops offered via Facebook, or we worded it poorly). Finally, we decided to take it step by step: train some people first, and then inform the community we had already trained through a community-based newsletter, where we told them about the upcoming workshops and asked them to tell their friends. This worked well, and we filled about 15 workshops in the first year, so we ended up doing more workshops than planned.

The lessons I can share with you from that period are the following:

- + It can be tough, also financially, to start a business this way. It takes a lot of dedication, grit, and faith in a good ending, since no money

is made in the early stages. The only way you'll survive this is if you truly, inherently love the work itself.

- + Minimising costs rigorously in this phase of the business is a crucial element. We didn't use offices, hire people, use cars or even business cards. We just used flip charts and markers and printed booklets in black and white.
- + A valuable network of fans can be crucial to your success. Focusing on building a fan base is, I believe, a good start. We got many offers of help, and found many 'clients' along the way.

EBBINGE

Installing happiness as a new strategic focal point in a recruitment firm

Ebbinge is a relatively small (about 60 people) recruitment firm in the Netherlands and Belgium. It has been around for more than 30 years and specialises in job candidate search, recruitment advice and filling interim positions for their clients. The company is different from any other I've seen, especially in how they treat people. Employees have a lot of freedom, old management structures are rarely used, and the partners in the organisation are always prepared to seriously re-design the organisation if they see a cause for it. It was in this latter respect that they asked for our help. They told me that happiness had always been on their agenda, but that, as a group of partners and founders, they had never quite reached a point where they felt they had nailed it in terms of displaying it to the outside world.

The Ebbinge partners joined one of the first open workshops we hosted in Amsterdam, and decided to work with us shortly after that. Later, we decided to run three simultaneous training programmes for them: one specifically for the partners and the other two for all the employees who wanted to join the course. We called the course 'Flourish', and it had similar aspects for all groups — although the partners received some extra management perspectives on the topic. Each group received five training sessions of roughly three hours, one for every dimension

of the PERMA model. We then ended with a collective session for the whole company to decide how to progress further. The strategy we used in the programme, per workshop, is presented below.

Positive Emotions Workshop — 3 hours

Before this initial workshop, we sent a survey to all participants to measure their initial well-being scores using Tayyab Rashid's Flourish Survey.² This was done to: a) make the PERMA model more personally relevant for the participants, and b) create a discussion about the dimensions, and questions behind, each component of the model. The workshop was then made up of the following points:

- + Why focus on happiness? (Theory).
- + The nature of happiness over time, and PERMA.
- + 1-1 on participant PERMA survey scores and what can be learned from them.
- + Theory: who's responsible for your happiness? The 50-10-40 formula.
- + Theory: the value of positive emotions.
- + Exercise: Peak Experiences in life.
- + Exercise: Loving Kindness Meditation.
- + Close with homework: Three Good Things Diary, Random Acts of Kindness, 360 Strengths-based Feedback e-mail to loved ones to ask for feedback.

Engagement Workshop — 3 hours

- + Check-in with experiences of the homework.
- + Recap of what we discussed during the first workshop.
- + Theory: the nature and occurrence of 'flow'.
- + Exercise: Spotting Strengths in others in the room (Ring of Fire).
- + Personal summary of strengths: combining 360 feedback with feedback from colleagues to draft a personal, coherent story.
- + Exercise: 1-1 coaching to design one strengths-based ritual to use one strength more often, or in new ways.
- + Close with homework: one random act of kindness.

Positive Relationships Workshop — 4 hours

- + Check-in with the experiences of the homework.
- + Recap on what we've learned so far in the first two sessions.
- + Theory: the nature and importance of positive relationships.
- + Theory: Active constructive responding.
- + Exercise: drawing your Personal Network Map on a flip chart.
- + Exercise: 1-1 coaching on the Personal Network Map.
- + Exercise: Gratitude Call to someone you're grateful to.
- + Close.

Meaning Workshop — 4 hours

- + Check-in with what's been learned so far in the course.
- + Theory: humans as 'meaning makers' in life.
- + Theory: organisations and shared meaning (for the partner group only).
- + Framework for the day: pleasure, meaning, strengths — the Three Big Questions.
- + Exercise: visualisation, a look back at life from your 80-year-old self.
- + Exercise: Life lines (explaining key moments in life to others in the room).
- + Personal summary of The Three Big Questions, and feedback on it from colleagues.
- + Close with homework: discuss the Three Big Questions with loved ones, prepare a final presentation on 'you', based on the Three Big Questions.

Accomplishment Workshop — 3 hours

- + Check-in with the group to recap all of the material.
- + Presentations from all participants.
- + Check-out with a big thank you to all participants.

Getting together, all groups as one

- + Debrief the whole group on how the course went.
- + 1-1 sharing of the most important elements learned from the course.
- + Theory: how to take this further — the art of creating rituals.
- + Design of rituals for the organisation by all the groups.
- + Vote for the best ideas, with all ideas posted on the wall.

- + End with a speech from the managing partner; approving the rituals chosen by the group.

Looking back, our first project with Ebbinge was as pleasurable as it was meaningful, and we're still involved with helping them to embed happiness as a strategic pillar within the organisation. At the time of writing, I have just delivered a breathing workshop together with Annelie Pompe to Ebbinge personnel, where they collectively practised breath holding techniques, and where some people reached personal records of more than 5 minutes without oxygen. We decided to offer the extra workshop since breathing is so strongly linked to well-being in many traditions (e.g. yoga), and freedivers, like Annelie, can provide unique perspectives on breathing. A picture of this workshop can be found in Figure 16 in this book.

We're also involved in training another group from the company in the science of happiness, making Ebbinge one of the first organisations where all employees are trained in positive psychology through multiple workshops. I'm certain that Ebbinge will succeed in their mission to a) make happiness one of the internal pillars to govern the company and b) bring some happiness to their clients.

SBV EXCELSIOR

Staying in the league against all odds

SBV Excelsior is a small football club from Rotterdam, the Netherlands. When the team was promoted to the top league, it proved to be quite a challenge. Excelsior didn't have a lot of money to spend, the stadium could only host around 3,500 people, and they didn't have any significant sponsors. They would have to rely on creative means to stay in the league.

After their first six months in the top league, Alex Pastoor, their head coach at the time, gave me a call. He explained that he needed help with a specific situation: his team had won some of their home games,

but they hadn't managed to win a single game away from their home stadium. He asked me to 'fix' this problem since he felt it was primarily a psychological issue. Although I told him I didn't believe in quick fixes, we decided that I would meet the team to see how to take it further.

On my first evening at the club, I spoke with the team. For a psychologist, talking to a football team is always an interesting, and slightly nerve-wracking, experience. Most players have never talked to a psychologist before, and aren't necessarily fond of them either. Players tend to believe that psychologists enter the room when there is a problem, so they are close to a symbol of trouble for the team. Luckily for me, this talk went relatively well. I reported back to Alex that I had noticed a few things: they mainly lacked the arrogance and mind-set I was used to seeing in other teams. They seemed unaware of what their strengths were. In fact, they had responded with silence to my questions on what their strengths were. After that minute of silence, one player then asked if I hadn't noticed that they were last in the league. He felt, therefore, that they obviously did not possess any clear strengths. I explained the matter to Alex. He told me to do whatever was needed to make it better, so we went to work.

Workshop 1: Tension

In this first workshop, we had to address one of the most pressing issues right away. We talked about the nature of anxiety: how does it feel to be nervous? 'Can others tell when you're nervous? How do nerves affect your game? And we discussed different methods of dealing with anxiety. In the end, we made profiles together with each player based on the IZOF³ (individual zones of optimal functioning) model, which showed the tension level, on a scale of 1–100, and the emotional state that worked best for them, based on prior experiences.

The effects of this workshop were quite amazing, since the players realised that they differed from each other in their needs before and during a game. They travelled together on long bus rides, sometimes sitting next to team mates who had completely different needs before a game.

They had, however, never openly discussed what they liked best before a game. This fact finally led to a serious discussion on how to individually prepare for games and how Alex should deliver his pre-match team talk. It led to a different style of game preparation: in the past Alex tried to deliver a 'one size fits all' speech, but after the workshop, he allowed players to use their own rituals to get ready for the game.

A few days after this first workshop, when I was climbing in the Alps with friends, I received a text message from Alex simply saying, 'Yeeehaaaa, when are you back?' I checked the internet and saw that they had won their first away game, scoring two goals to one against NAC Breda.

Workshop 2: Strengths

The second pressing issue was the lack of assertiveness and bravado in the team, and the team was totally engaged in the workshop. After we briefly took the players through the theory, we handed out sticky notes. Each player was asked to write down the one strength you 100% believe each one of their teammates had (note the similarity to the Contribution Cards exercise, mentioned in the positive leadership chapter). When they were finished, they were asked to stand and hand over the sticky notes to their colleagues and give them a brief explanation.

We then asked the players to cluster their strengths and briefly present them to the group. The energy levels rose significantly for this exercise, and they made a lot of jokes in the process. The following week, we asked each player to sit with Alex to discuss how to train their unique strengths as well as they could. Alex decided to change his training strategy based on these insights, allowing more strengths-based training as a result.

Workshop 3: Personality Profiles

To embed the work we had done into the team's training schedule, we felt we needed one more step. It would involve Alex, as he would be the one working with the players for the rest of the season. Therefore, in the final session with the players, we focused on different personality

types using MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator). Although the scientific evidence for the validity of the MBTI is thin, we felt that it would be of value to this team since it would lead to the right conversations. After three workshops, the players had made their own profile which showed how they liked to prepare for their games, what they perceived their strengths to be, and how they perceived their own personality. They then handed their individual profiles to Alex.

The results of our work with Excelsior were very real. After winning their first away game after our first work together, they continued to win four of the last six games away. In the end, the team acquired 70% more points on average after the workshops, and stayed in the league.

At the time of writing, we're again involved with SBV Excelsior. They've made it back into the top league and face an 'against all odds' challenge to stay in it (which they will achieve if they finish higher than 16th). Once again, the team is doing amazing: they are currently ranked 13th after 25 games, and can already be considered safe with 8 more games to play.

HTC KITE CHALLENGE

Kite 6,000 km across the Atlantic Ocean

I joined the preparation for the HTC Kite Challenge, facilitated by a company called Enable Passion, through a guy named Filippo. When I first met Filippo through a friend, I couldn't help thinking he was a bit nuts. In a coffee bar in Amsterdam, he told me — in a completely serene, calm and unemotional manner — about his plans to kite surf across the entire Atlantic Ocean (6,000 km). When I probed him with a few questions on how realistic his plans were, he simply explained that it could be done with the right currents and wind. He did not yet know whether he wanted to bring a boat along for the ride.

About a month later, Filippo invited me to join a Skype call with a few other crew members, and invited me to tell them what I had to offer

to the group. I briefly explained what I did for a living (making people happier, making sports teams perform better), and that they were welcome to make use of my skills if they felt I could be useful. Luckily for me, one member of the team, a girl named Camilla, had heard about me from a base jumper that I had previously worked with, and was in favour of my work. And so I travelled to Spain to meet them, just three weeks before they left for a ride that had never been attempted by anybody before.

The morning I stepped on board their catamaran in the Mediterranean Sea, I thought they looked well prepared. They had gear lying all over the place, HTC banners and sweaters everywhere to show their sponsoring. In short, their preparation seemed to have gone smoothly. After we sailed from the harbour, it was time for my session. I briefly explained what I was planning, and we started the first exercise. I asked them to follow me in a quick visualisation exercise. 'Please close your eyes for a minute,' I asked them, 'and imagine calling home after the trip. Tell the story to the people at home, as if the trip was all over and you have achieved everything you had wished for.' I then asked them to write down their personal story. Rather worryingly for the team, we quickly found disagreements. Although their public material and website clearly stated that they were going to cross the ocean, the related sub-goals (how fast, how safe, what to do in certain conditions, etc.) weren't clear. We spent an hour working on goal clarity, getting the team to one single sentence that encompassed what they were going to do. It was a bit more complex than it appeared, and included a list of sub-goals ranked in order of importance (e.g. safety v. speed). They would in turn use this ranking as a guideline for future decisions.

Afterwards, we discussed the nature of working in small teams. We looked at other small teams operating under stressful conditions, using the Navy Seals as an example, and the team then collectively co-designed the 'rules of play' for the expedition. Where they had believed in a democratic decision style before our meeting, they now felt that a more autocratic way could work better given the nature of the expedition. In the end, they decided that one person would watch the kite

operations (kite leader). This person would in turn communicate with the captain. All the other people on the boat could communicate with the kite leader.

The last exercise we did was also one of the most important. We discussed the need for regular feedback in this process. We did an adaptation of the Ring of Fire technique, there on the boat in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a beautiful moment, and it was the first time the team had worked one-to-one. The team decided to do this regularly during their expedition.

I'm very proud to say the HTC Kite Challenge was a great success: the team reached the other side of the ocean, overcame difficulties on the way, including engine failure, and did not suffer any loss of life during the trip.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Bringing happiness to a troubled country

'The percentage of people thriving in Egypt is low, and most people there are pessimistic about the future, so you have to prepare well for it,' was the first thing Dina told me. Dina Sherif is one of the founders of Ahead of the Curve — a social business dedicated to the promotion of sustainable management practices — and one of the strongest women I have ever met. I met Dina after a talk I did for THNK, a school for creative leadership in Amsterdam, where she was a participant. When I'd finished, she asked if I could bring some of my 'happy vibes' to Egypt. I agreed, accepting the challenge as a welcome one, knowing it would be a significant challenge. This is how Dina and I structured the day there, in which people from many different organisations joined in the talk about happiness. Here is an overview of our programme for the day:

- + Start with a quick check-in, find out the various learning goals in the group.
- + Theory on the science of happiness: PERMA, past theories.
- + Theory and exercises on positive emotions (Peak Experience).

- + Break-out groups: how can we spark more positivity within our organisations?
- + Theory on engagement (Ring of Fire).
- + Break-out groups: how can we create a more engaged workforce?
- + Theory and exercises on positive relationships (Network Map, Gratitude Call).
- + Theory and exercises on meaning (Meaning Maker Story).
- + Participants present what they learned during the day.

The project has sparked interest for the topic of happiness in the region, and we're now in the process of starting Purpose+ in Egypt together with Dina. The lesson here is simple: the topic is relevant for people from all walks of life, regardless of cultural background. Although I would by no means say that you should prepare in the same way for all groups, I do believe it is certainly possible to do work on the science of happiness in other cultures equally well.

NASCOM

Towards a flourishing ecosystem

I met Jo Martens, CEO of NASCOM, a Belgian company specialising in digital service design, at the European Conference on Positive Psychology. I had just delivered a 'slightly provocative talk' (according to the host of the day, Jan Walburg), where I had told the audience that I felt all the research on happiness was great, but that it was now time for people to actually translate that research into practical, scalable concepts that could be used to make life better for the masses. I had also shown them some methods we were developing to make that a reality.

Jo came to me after the talk, among a long line of people who came to shake my hand, and I remember him as the only person who didn't fully agree with the story. He told me that he felt the story was nice and all, but that it didn't really hit the target. In his view, it wasn't about creating happy companies, *it should be about making happy companies that can act as catalysts for the creation of happy ecosystems that sur-*

round them. It would be about creating catalysts for change everywhere. I couldn't agree more, and we quickly became friends.

In the following months, we decided to train everyone who was willing at NASCOM, a small company (around 50 people) that Jo was running in Belgium. Phase 1 would focus on NASCOM itself, while phase 2 would extend to NASCOM's ecosystem: families of all employees and their clients.

The content of phase 1 was very similar to that used with Ebbinge, the big difference being that the IT-driven crowd at NASCOM preferred more of a 'rapid prototyping' strategy. That meant there would be no clear-cut strategies from our side, but instead, the raw building blocks of positive psychology through which they could build the best possible solutions from their end. They told us they would prototype their rituals themselves, and would 'hack the system' with it. In short, they wanted to design the happiness world along with us, and they did so by creating their own rituals for the organisation!

At the time of writing, we have just presented the entire Flourish course to NASCOM, and the experience was simply amazing. Next to the impact on the employees in the course, we felt that the relationships we built during the project were amazing (we slept at Jo's house during the project, had dinners together, and I now consider him a close friend). This project strengthens my belief that it is indeed possible to work together and, at the same time, achieve more together than just business value.

NUON

Creating a happier customer service environment

Nuon (or Vattenfall, which owns 64% of the company's shares these days) is an energy company providing gas and electricity in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the UK. The company faces difficult times for a number of reasons, not least the fierce competition in the energy

market, which has led to a lot of redundancies over the past few years. Nuon has internally, however, always focused on being a 'Great Place to Work', paying attention to how employees perceive working for the company. It was because of this that I met Cindy, head of customer service in the Netherlands, the department that probably feels most of the difficulties the company faces since they're directly in touch with customers all day, every day.

After a short co-designing phase, we decided to do two things: I would first work with the newly formed management team, training them in positive psychology and making sure they would get the results needed, and we would simultaneously train all the team leaders in how to use positive psychology for their teams.

Below is the programme we used for the team leaders. The version for the management team was only slightly more elaborate, but they both followed the same content in order to share the same language and models.

Workshop 1: Strengthening Self (3.5 hours)

- + Personal learning goals check-in.
- + Theory: PERMA + Vitality as the cornerstones of a fulfilling life.
- + Theory: 50-10-40 formula.
- + Explanation of the Meaning Maker Story (pleasure, meaning, strengths).
- + Exercise: pleasure circle (Peak Experiences).
- + Exercise: meaning circle (Compassion Meditation).
- + Exercise: strengths circle (Ring of Fire).
- + Small group discussion: overlap of the circles.
- + Check-out with one lesson learned per person.
- + Homework: Three Good Things and one random act of kindness.

Workshop 2: Strengthening Others (4 hours)

- + Check-in with lessons learned from last time and homework experiences.
- + Theory: quality of intimate relationships as a source of happiness.

- + Exercise: personal Network Map.
- + Exercise: 1–1 Appreciative Inquiry coaching on the Network Map.
- + Exercise: Gratitude Call.
- + Theory: rituals as the way to create sustainable change in teams.
- + Exercise: Appreciative Inquiry to get to rituals that affect others.
- + Check-out with one lesson learned per person.
- + Homework: prepare a presentation for the last session. Do the rituals, and document the impact (video, pictures, text).

Workshop 3: Strengthening the Organisation (3 hours)

- + Check-in with debrief of lessons learned in the whole programme.
- + Presentations by team leaders, showing the rituals they experimented with.
- + Check-out.

I look back very positively on the Nuon project. First, the management team succeeded in their mission to deliver the results they aspired to. Next to that, the team atmosphere has been very positive the whole year. Also, we had fifty-two team leaders each experiment with five rituals to make the workplace a bit more fun and meaningful, leading to a total of 260 rituals that were tested within the actual working environment. In the end, Nuon decided to make a movie showing some of the rituals, which was shared throughout Nuon as inspiration.

GOOGLE

Failing in kick-starting the project in the periphery

Our work for Google started when Jeroen, one of my colleagues, called to say that he had arranged a meeting with the human resources director of Google in the Netherlands. We agreed to host open workshops on the science of happiness in Amsterdam first, since we didn't have the buy-in from the head office in Mountain View, to see if there was a need for it in the Amsterdam office.

After a week, we learned that there were too many people wanting to

join the workshop, so we had to host two separate ones. I remember that both nights were great, filled with talks about the essence of life and work. Jeroen and I loved the people at Google, the great discussions and the international nature of the discussions.

The future of the project was taken to Dublin, where we analysed everything that Google was doing for the well-being of their employees and where we found gaps in it (meaning: what positive psychology could offer but was not yet present in the existing material). To do this, we assembled a Google Happiness Team with some great Googlers who all wanted to join the mission to make Google 'the happiest company on the planet' and, in turn, influence the world. We noticed that although the company had 18 different initiatives focusing on well-being, they lacked coherence and a single measurement of success, and were not all available in every location. Also, they were strongly regulated by Mountain View, and there was not much for people outside HQ. After the analysis and some extra workshops in Dublin, where everybody invested time and effort, it was time to take the process a step further. We had to bring it to Mountain View in order to really kick-start the initiative. However, although the Google Happiness Team did pretty much everything they could, they never really found a sympathetic ear on the other side of the ocean and we ended up with a project that never got off the ground.

Although I feel disappointed about the total scope and impact of the project — knowing we could have done many more good things had Mountain View listened to its employees — I have fond memories of the people we worked with to get the local initiatives going. Also, I feel it's an important story to tell since it's filled with lessons for all future science of happiness experts in companies. I see the following lessons in the story:

- + Although the 'oil spill method' (where you start at the bottom of the pyramid) seems to make sense, it's often very hard to implement. Upper management needs to be aligned with the purpose of the project.
- + We gave too much (of our time and effort) in return for very

little. Although giving is good, make sure you get something real in return. This is not meant to make you rich, but make sure your clients clearly see the value you deliver and will commit to doing something with it.

- + Just say 'no' when there is no firm commitment from the client. Half jobs don't help anybody, so it's better to wait for real projects.

PWC

Training future company leaders in positive psychology

One company that has entrusted us with some good work from the beginning is PwC, one of the classic 'big four' auditing firms. I must admit that when we started in the science of happiness we never expected a company like PwC to be one of our bigger clients (we thought it would be the more radical, innovative companies that would find us), but they are and we've achieved many great things together.

The three moments that stand out for me in our work together so far are:

- + Training all the future directors in positive psychology.
- + Training PwC new hires in the art of building positive relationships.
- + Giving a PwC leadership summit for local leaders on the island of Aruba.

For the first of the above, we developed a 2.5-hour workshop that targeted the basics of positive psychology. This was necessary due to the nature of the target group: they were often busy and most were involved in multiple courses to further their personal development. This was what we did for them:

Positive Psychology for Future Directors Workshop

- + Discover personal learning goals.
- + Introduction to the VUCA⁺ world, where the pace of change is exponential instead of linear.
- + Debrief personal business challenges, rate on VUCA scale.

- + Group brainstorm about the solution for this (optimism, agility, purpose).
- + Latest model of well-being in life: PERMA.
- + Own ability to influence life: 50–10–40 formula.
- + Exercises: pleasure, meaning, strengths.
- + Small break-out group discussions to craft ‘Meaning Maker Story’ with feedback.
- + Check-out with lessons learned.

When I look back at the sessions we did with these future directors, only good memories come to mind. I remember great discussions, people being surprised by the topic and existing senior partners joining in some discussions on ‘meaning’ for the organisation since they felt it was such a very relevant topic.

I’m sure PwC will be our partner in more beautiful work in the next years, and am very thankful for the trust we’ve received so far.

TOMTOM

Designing a well-being strategy for a global firm

TomTom, once one of the main designers of portable GPS devices in the world, moved into the health and well-being business a few years back. Now, they also sell GPS watches with built-in well-being software, showing your heart rate and other features.

When TomTom first invited us to give a workshop in Amsterdam, we became more interested in the firm and how it would survive over time. Given the violent disruptions to the GPS market (most people use their phones to navigate, making additional devices useless), we wondered how they were doing. We found a company that struggled, but which also had some clear ideas on how to move beyond this point. Part of it was to focus more on well-being, and we were asked to help them with it.

After a workshop on the science of well-being, given to a number of stakeholders in the business, we were asked to co-design a global well-being strategy for TomTom. On the day itself, we sat down with a few key HR people and started with a short meditation, after which people were invited to draw the future they saw for the company. Analysing the drawings was great fun, and we found many people had shared interests. We followed up with a round of 'sensing' to get outside perspectives, and did this through a round of expert calls on the topic of organisational well-being. We included the best ideas in our plan and collectively designed the PowerPoint slides we would need to convince the HR department, and later the board of directors.

Today, the process to get this mission widely accepted is slowly getting there, and we're quite sure that many beautiful things will follow. A TomTom factory in Taiwan has already shown great interest in being the first to pilot the programme, and we're looking forward to it.

MCKINSEY & COMPANY

Enriching leadership models with positive psychology

As a former consultant there, McKinsey & Company is still one of my favourite companies to work for. The atmosphere, the effective projects and the many friends I have in the firm always inspire me to do great things with them. One of those things was to evaluate their current leadership curriculum to check how much positive psychology was already included, and where there were still gaps.

Together with a few old friends in the firm, we went through all the classic leadership material they had (which is a lot) and checked which were basically positive psychological interventions. The analysis proved useful; although McKinsey already possessed some positive psychology techniques in their leadership curriculum, they still lacked many others. We ended up updating the curriculum to include more positive psychology.

Lessons learned from this project:

- + Once you have the list of positive psychology interventions, it is relatively easy to evaluate whether the client's leadership materials are up to date. This can be a very useful exercise for the client since they lack the knowledge of positive psychology. You can find the list in the mind maps section of the book.
- + Companies, and their HR directors, will usually tell you that their leadership model is solid and a lot of research has been put into it, but that is not necessarily true. Many of them can quite easily be improved, or enriched, with a few days' work.

FUTURE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN ORGANISATIONS

Now we're getting to the end of the book, I'd like to go back to the beginning of the story: the beauty of existence, and the fact that we're here to experience it. We live on an astoundingly beautiful planet, born 4.54 billion years ago, where all of the life forms known to us in the entire universe exist. Although the existence of life forms elsewhere in the universe seems probable to some,¹ it is by no means certain that we'll detect life in the coming centuries given the scale of things. Even if we manage to find life, biologists believe it will most likely be in the form of microbes that we could detect through the spectrometry of starlight in which we would only find the 'biosignature' of living organisms. Chances are that the life we detect will live so far away from us that we will never be able to reach it, let alone effectively communicate with it.

That puts our Earth, and our species, in a very special position. Although Earth could be considered as nothing more than a tiny speck of stardust near the edge of a galaxy among a hundred billion other galaxies in the universe,² I believe it is indeed highly special. In my view, life on our Earth is fragile, beautiful in its diversity, and therefore extremely precious. On Earth, we not only have life, but also a species that is conscious about being alive, and conscious of our place in our solar system.

We live on this planet next to roughly 2 million other species that we know of (biologists expect the real number to be at least three times as

high) — with new species currently being discovered at a rate of roughly 20,000 per year.³ The beauty of this situation lies in the fact that many species perceive the world entirely differently than we do: where we are audio-visual creatures, 99% of species of animals, plants and fungi rely almost exclusively on the secretion of pheromones to communicate.⁴ We can also only see an infinitesimally small part of the electromagnetic spectrum (400–700 nanometre wavelengths of light), and fail to see many other things around us that other species *can* see. They may, therefore, perceive a world that's entirely different from the one we experience, and possess a mental life that we can't even begin to imagine. A great example of this is bees finding pollen and nectar in flower petals by searching for reflected ultraviolet light, or eagles spotting a mouse through its urine trails, simply because they reflect ultraviolet light. Some birds are also known for another sense: magnetoreception, a sense that allows the bird to detect a magnetic field in order to help it direct its course in flight. In short, we live on a beautiful planet with an astounding complexity of life, but this life is highly fragile. Humanity's ecological footprint exceeded the world biocapacity in 1970, and currently we would need 1.5 earths to meet the demands humanity makes on nature.⁵ A sign of that is our biodiversity, which declined by an astounding 52% between 1970 and 2010.

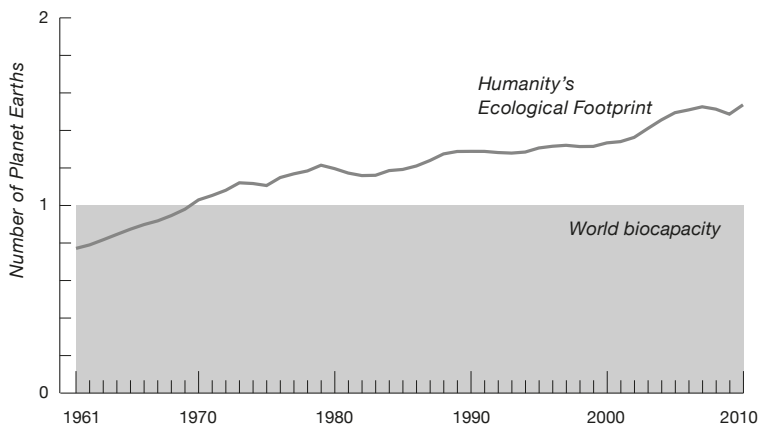


Figure 31 Humanity's ecological footprint has been too large for the last 40 years, and is still growing

Why am I starting this chapter with a story on sustainability? Because I believe that the future of positive psychology, organisations and sustainability will be one and the same. Where humanities and science have long been seen as separate, I believe that the future will incorporate both perspectives with the same scientific rigour to better predict the future for humans. For most organisations, that means a perspective change: where there is data behind profit, there will be (better) data behind people. Google has already shown some of the benefits of this, with their People Analytics department.

Another point that I believe is worth mentioning: I do not, as some thinkers have argued, believe we'll move to a position where we'll abandon profit altogether. I am a firm believer in the exchange of goods and services through a system that provides the infrastructure for unlimited trade and exchange of ideas (whether it's our current bank notes, or bitcoins). I don't think money (and the corresponding profits), as a concept, is the problem here. Therefore, I see the future for only *purposeful AND profitable* organisations: organisations that are both self-sustaining and create beauty at the same time.

Below are some future directions the Purpose+ team is currently exploring together with our clients.

6.1

FLOURISHING AS THE INNER SIDE OF SUSTAINABILITY

When Jeroen Drijver, current head of our business in the Netherlands, joined the company, he did so for a very particular reason: to make business more sustainable. Although it may seem farfetched to you, he clearly saw the connection between happiness and sustainability. He told me at one of our first meetings that 'happiness is the inner side of sustainability'.

By now, I'm starting to believe he was right. And so does the UN.⁶ The crux to believing this is found in simple things: people who flourish tend to care more for others and are, in general, more altruistic. They perceive the world as rich in opportunities, as opposed to rich in threats.⁷ This perspective change, seeing the world in a different light, is now needed to effect long-term change in companies. Although I don't know where we'll end up with this process, I can envision the following processes appearing in the coming years:

- + Sustainability departments in companies will have to have more activities based on behavioural change to be seen as successful; they could well use positive psychology for this.
- + Sustainability 'departments' may disappear altogether in organisations that are willing to make 'goodness' an inherent part of the entire value chain.
- + Consultancy firms could well utilise positive psychology to trigger corporate leaders to make more positive and 'good' decisions when it comes to designing new strategies.
- + 'Don't be evil' and 'risk management' will be replaced by 'doing good'. The alternative simply is not powerful enough.

6.2

POSITIVE ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN

Many organisations depend on motivational systems that can only be classified by psychologists as 'extrinsic'. I believe this is a) a very costly way to motivate people, and b) it's not the most effective way. In the future, organisations will have to embody many insights now appearing in positive psychology in order to engage and vitalise the workforce.

Here are a few things I imagine:

- + Basic workshops on the science of happiness and optimism for everybody that joins the company.
- + Leadership development where purpose and happiness are core elements.
- + Measurements of happiness per department or team, with open data sharing. When combined with NFC (near field communication)

technology that is already available on many smartphones, it could track where people are in organisations and how well they are doing throughout the day.

- + Rewards that fit people's needs. Closer to the Dream Machine technique, people will be rewarded in smarter ways — fulfilling needs that exist. Openness about those needs, and shared mental models to discuss them, is a prerequisite.
- + Key performance indicators (KPIs) on purpose, as well as on performance, for every part of the value chain.
- + Annual reports that cover both purpose and profit.
- + Social network analysis done in organisations (again, open and transparent data), showing the 'positive energisers' within the organisation, with corresponding rewards.
- + Structures that are less hierarchic in which self-leadership can prevail on specific topics (e.g. holacracy⁸ at this moment).

We're discussing these issues with our clients, and we notice that many of them are already discussing topics like these internally. We therefore intend to bring our clients together this year to learn from each other.

Add another part of positive design; it also relates to the actual buildings. Structures create behaviour. Form creates function. How we behave in organisations is a function of its design.

6.3

POSITIVE SHAREHOLDER AGREEMENTS

The biggest complaint I get from CEOs when I pitch our story relates to realism and shareholders. They often feel that although the company might want to do more 'positive business' and be more sustainable, this is not necessarily encouraged by shareholders, who have mainly short-term interests. To give you an example of just how short-term that can be, 70% of all US equities trading is now done by 'hyperspeed' traders, holding stocks for only a few seconds, with no purpose whatsoever.

I doubt that this is the only way shareholder agreements can be designed. As Dominic Barton, CEO of McKinsey & Company, wrote in an article called *Capitalism for the Long Term*,⁹ ‘quarterly capitalism’ needs to be replaced by ‘long term’ capitalism. Long term in this case is defined as five to seven years. This shift would embody a few critical elements, like restructuring incentive structures and having executives that provide organisations with more long-term visions. This alone would not be enough however, the perspective change would have to start with those who provide the capital in the first place.

A way to start the process is to document what you are really trying to accomplish with the organisation, and make it public. We have done so in a manifesto (included in this book as an appendix), which is public information. Partners in the organisation have to agree with the mission (and sign it), or else they will never become partner. Another way is to make sure that you only have partners who are personally involved in the organisation. Although I realise that we’re not yet far enough when it comes to more positive, long-term, meaningful shareholder agreements, I’m quite positive about the future since I see many people experimenting with new models around me.

6.4

POSITIVE LEADERSHIP MODELS

Much of the success of positive psychology will depend on leaders: whether they are able to use the content to create more beautiful business models or not will affect many of us. The perspective of abundance, of the fragile nature of life on our planet, and the value of finding beauty in life for those consciously here to experience it, will have to be embodied to create a new economic paradigm.

Leadership development, then, is less about managing KPIs or communicating clearly. It is less about skills than about the heart of the matter: changing the perspective on what a great business should do, and changing the perspective on what the people working for you care

about. I therefore envision leadership development programmes that are different from the ones we use today: skills training will become a secondary pursuit, having the right perspective will be core. Some skills in this regard will also become more relevant than others; the reflective art of ‘Janusian thinking’ — where leaders learn to embrace apparent paradoxes — could well be seen as a valuable skill in the future.

6.5

POSITIVE RESIZING

Most organisations face periods of downsizing over time. In such organisations, it is common that employees hold negative perceptions of their organisations. Grudges, hostility, self-centredness, blaming and retribution-seeking are common reactions among employees.¹⁰ These negative emotions can in turn lead to deteriorating performance over time.¹¹ The scientific explanation for these results is that downsizing destroys social capital; it essentially breaks interpersonal connections between people and that weakens the glue that binds individuals to each other, and to the organisation.

At the same time, most leaders feel that the pace of change is speeding up, and it is becoming increasingly relevant to be ‘agile’ as an organisation, ideally also when it comes to the size of your workforce. Having a large workforce can easily put you into a weak position once the market changes.

To deal with these changes effectively, I believe positive psychology will also be needed to organise layoffs in the best, most ethical way. It may involve giving people tools (workshops, coaching, online courses) to deal with uncertainty, management decisions that reflect fairness for people leaving a firm, or social structures surrounding organisations that provide security for its former members in other ways. In the end, it will be a way to say goodbye in the best possible, most humane way to people who have helped to build the organisation.

6.6

BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID INNOVATIONS

The bottom of the pyramid (or BoP, as it's often written) is the largest socio-economic group in the world. The term refers to the 3 billion people who live on less than \$2.50 per day.¹² As Stuart Hart, Professor Emeritus at Cornell University, explains in his books¹³ and articles,¹⁴ there are huge opportunities for organisations to do good — and earn money while doing so — at the bottom of the pyramid. Currently, most innovation is expensive, and focused on the approximately 800 million humans earning more than \$20,000 per year. According to Hart, there will be a huge amount of 'reverse innovation', innovations trickling up from the bottom of the pyramid to other markets in the years to come.

As for well-being, I'm aware that the strategies in this book apply mostly to the Western business world, where many people are employed in relatively large organisations. However, I believe that there is room for this kind of work at the bottom of the pyramid too, and that we should not wait until the basics (food, sanitation, etc.) are taken care of first. A great example of targeting the bottom of the pyramid with happiness work is Art of Living (AoL),¹⁵ an organisation in India that provides courses ranging from the science of happiness to breathing techniques. Although the target for AoL is mostly India, they provide courses around the globe to fund their not-for-profit work. It is my sincere hope that more organisations will have the courage to move in this direction too.

6.7

VALUE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

The techniques described in this book are not specific to particular cultures or underlying value structures. A great way to visualise the different value systems around the world comes from Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, and is based on the World Values Survey.¹⁶

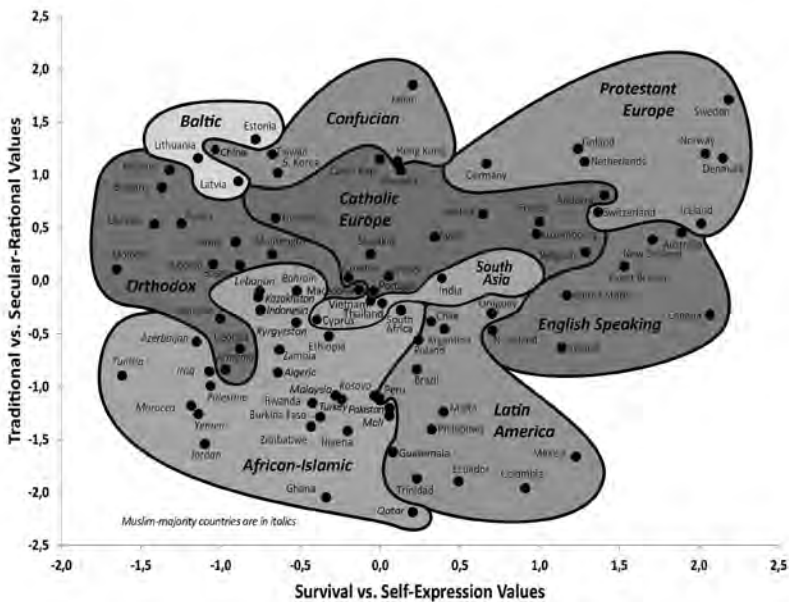


Figure 32 The Inglehart-Welzel cultural map of the world

The authors claim that more than 70% of cross-national differences in values are explained by just two dimensions.

The two axes on the map show that the world's societies can differ in two main dimensions. The first dimension highlights the differences between *traditional values* (where religion, parent-child ties, traditional family ties and authority are very important; these are usually seen in societies with high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook) and *secular-rational values* (where the factors mentioned above are seen as less relevant). The other dimension highlights the difference between *survival values* (where economic and physical security is a predominant focus) and *self-expression values* (where environmental protection, tolerance, gender equality and participation in decision-making are seen as essential).

It is my belief that most of the books related to the current 'science of happiness' have originated in societies with high levels of self-express-

sion values and secular-rational values, and that the implementation may therefore be limited to those cultures. Although we have hosted a few successful workshops in countries with other value systems, it is too early to tell if the techniques in this book can be applied there. My expectation, and hope, is that they will be adapted for better usage in other value systems around the world.

FINAL THOUGHTS: A NOTE ON PERSONAL CHANGE

People don't change easily. In fact, when I became a management consultant with a particular taste for change, I soon learned that 70% of all company change programmes fail, mostly due to human factors.¹ Surprisingly, this number hasn't changed over time, it's still the same as in the 1960s. Creating lasting change in organisations, or in people, it seems, is a tough nut to crack.

In my work, I encounter many people who do not believe that personal change is a real possibility. Those people usually provide me with explanations that relate to their own relationships, and disappointments in this area. This belief, although understandable, is of course a self-fulfilling prophecy. It leads people to stop their efforts to change themselves or others altogether, and they even fail to embark on a journey of change in the first place.

So what does research tell us about personal change? Let's look at this question from two different angles: the cream of the crop — elite performers — and those who don't do so well: people with psychological disorders.

Firstly, the cream of the crop. These could be artists, musicians, people with high potential in business, or anyone who does extremely well in life. In my view, those people are living proof that personal change is possible. As research shows time and again, peak performers are not born, but made. They are mostly made by deliberate practice, with

popular rules of thumb suggesting we need around 10,000 hours of practice to master something.² Although this rule seems to be simplistic in hindsight, and we now know that not all variance in performance can be attributed to practice, it remains a significant factor.³ Changing oneself for the better then, is definitely possible for this group.

Let’s take a look at people with psychological disorders. Research shows that treating disorders can be a highly complex business, and not everything works equally well for everyone. However, we know how well these interventions work in general. Here’s a summary of personal change prospects for people who suffer from a psychological disorder. The success rate is the amount of people who have their problems significantly reduced by treatment.⁴ As shown in the table below, most psychological disorders have treatments that are reasonably effective.

Psychological disorders with their expected future ‘positive change’ rates, categorised per treatment

Disorder	Outlook	Treatments, with succes rate in %
Panic disorders	✓✓✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Cognitive therapy (80–100%)– Tranquilizers (60–80%, but with side effects)
Depression	✓✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Cognitive therapy (60–80%)– Interpersonal therapy (60–80%)– Drugs (60–80%, with possible side effects)– Electroconvulsive shock (80–90%, but with serious side effects)
Anxiety disorders	✓✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Meditation (60–80%)– Progressive relaxation (~50%)– Tranquilizers (60–80%, but only short term benefits with side effects and a big chance of relapse)
Phobias	✓✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Extinction therapy (60–80%)– Antidepressants (~50%, but no cure and with side effects)
Obsessions	✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Behaviour therapy (50–60%)– Anafranil (50–60%, but with side effects and only short term benefits)

PTSS	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cognitive-behavioural therapy (better than placebo, not great) – Antidepressants (better than placebo) – Mindfulness (promising results, not clear what success rate is)
Sexual dysfunctions	✓✓✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Direct sexual therapy (70–95%)
Bulimia nervosa	✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Antidepressants (~50%, but with side effects) – Cognitive-behavioural therapy (~50%)
Anger	?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unclear
Alcoholism	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Psychotherapy doesn't work – Alcoholics Anonymous has never been tested – Naltrexone (medicine) works a bit, ~50% benefit (but with side effects)

Table 11: Summary of positive change achieved through different methods

What can we conclude after seeing those numbers? I think the right conclusion is that, although interventions have to be specific, positive change is definitely possible.

The question then remains: what is the best way to realise positive change in your life? Someone once asked Tal Ben-Shahar this question when we presented at a conference together. He quickly understood that this was probably the most important question of the whole conference, and he drew 3 lines on a flip chart. This is what he drew:

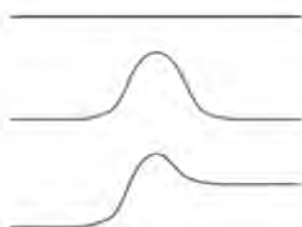


Figure 33 Three ways to deal with new information: neglect it, enjoy it, ritualise it

He calmly explained that the lines represented the beneficial effect that the conference would have on its participants. He predicted that there would be three different groups of people, each group with a different level of impact. For the first group, about 10% of us, the conference wouldn't have any impact, represented by the flat line on top. Secondly, there is a significantly large group of people, represented by the middle line, who will be affected but only for the duration of the conference (or possibly a few days more). This is what many corporate trainers or managers experience frequently — people seem to get something when you explain it, but return to their old habits soon after. However, the third group, represented by the bottom line, would indeed reap real benefits from the conference over time. This third group would understand that it would take grit and personalised rituals to create positive change in our lives.

EPILOGUE

Writing this book has been both meaningful and challenging for me. Meaningful because I hope that the content will be extremely valuable to people, and challenging because it meant I had to write down what was mostly only in my subconscious mind before. What added to my experience of a challenge was the fear that I might be missing crucial elements when writing, and the fact that I had to do it when the company was ‘exploding’ at the same time. Regardless, I felt that it was necessary to start somewhere on our road to a new and better business paradigm, and therefore I wanted to share my views on and understanding of how this *could* be done.

It is my sincere hope that we will continue to make progress on the path to a more sustainable, meaningful way of doing business, and in doing so will incorporate the science of human happiness. On this path, I can only hope we won’t let ourselves be governed too much by fear. I have experienced time and again that people’s fears are the greatest obstacles to change, with fear of the unknown, fear of losing a job or fear of losing the respect of those around you as classic examples. In my view, there is a place for fear, but it can also lead to stagnation or even deterioration of the status quo. In difficult times, we need to overcome our fears and try something new, and embedding the science of happiness in our business models to create exponential positive impact is exactly such a thing.

I would like to leave you with an invitation, since I realise this book is only just the beginning of the journey, and know that the implementation of these concepts will be the real challenge. My invitation is

the following: join us in our search for proven best practices when it comes to well-being in organisations in the Purpose+Community. This is a community where all material will be shared openly, and organisations can learn from each other. I would be thrilled and honoured to welcome you to our community. You can join by contacting me at hello@purposeplus.com.

APPENDIX

PURPOSE+ MANIFESTO

At Purpose+ we aim to help people, organisations and societies flourish. We do so by *embedding the latest theories of positive psychology into organisations*. We attempt to bridge the gap between the research done on well-being and the real lives people live day to day, and see ourselves as the catalyst for the pragmatic implementation of this scientific thinking.

WHY WE EXIST

Fundamental beliefs behind Purpose+

We exist because, despite a significant rise in GDP in most countries over the last century, just 17% of the world's population can be considered to be 'flourishing' at the moment.

Why should we care about well-being? Well-being (or 'flourishing', the word for someone who's doing really well in his/her own subjective experience) has historically been seen as the highest pursuit in life, or, in Aristotle's words, the 'one thing that can be pursued for its own sake'. But there are more reasons for a population, and organisations, to pursue happiness. Firstly, we believe the present lack in personal flourishing is one of the underlying reasons for the fact that we, as human beings, have so far been unable to deal effectively with many of the overarching problems we face as a species (e.g. climate change, income and capital distribution, extinction of species, world hunger, deforestation, wars, etc.). We believe that, in order to look beyond current boundaries, paradoxes and conflicts, we should learn to view the

world from a different perspective: a perspective of wonder, abundance and oneness. For people to change this perspective — the so-called move from ego to ecosystem focus — it seems personal flourishing is an important catalyst (albeit not the only required solution). Secondly, the link between happiness and great performance (at work, in life, in sports) has proven to be solid — so getting people to lead more fulfilling lives is likely to affect personal and organisational performance as well. Thirdly, with 40% of our well-being affected by our own intentional activities and choices in life, we should realise that our levels of well-being can indeed be positively influenced. Our well-being, and that of our organisations, is a dynamic state, and we can learn to view life, and business, in a different way.

Why focus on organisations? We believe that organisations are key players in society and influence many people's lives. Real changes in the world should therefore include serious changes to the way we work with each other. The heart of this matter is to re-connect organisations to purpose (e.g. 'meaningful business' with 'meaning makers' as leaders), to create organisations that are truly fitting for human beings, and to help them solve the challenges we face as a species in the 21st century. We envision organisations that are willing to put purpose next to financial statistics on the first page of their annual reports, with long-term goals and investors that are willing to accept this. We dream of leaders who are judged on 'meaningful impact delivered' AND profitability, and we want to feel that people are fully engaged again with the mission they are working towards. The fact that many organisations face serious difficulties with this at the moment (trust in organisations and their leaders to do the right thing is at a historically low point while less than one in five employees is truly engaged at work) only strengthens these points: organisations need well-being now more than ever.

HOW WE WORK AT PURPOSE+

Choices and Rituals

1. We commit to putting long-term meaning first at all times, because we intend to be a role model for a meaningful business paradigm. We choose to 'do good', instead of classic and outdated 'don't be evil' statements.
 - a. We measure success with two KPIs for everyone in our network: 'meaning' (M) and 'profit' (P). When challenged, meaning weighs twice as much as profit. These KPIs are how we define success, and they are central to our business strategy and all the projects we do. Meaning is further broken down into two components: number of people we meet (N), and the positive impact (P) we have on them. Expressed as a formula: $\text{Success} = 2M + P$, where $\text{Meaning} = N * P$ and $\text{Profit} = \text{Revenue} - \text{Costs}$. Both KPIs will be present in our annual reports.
 - b. We transfer 10% of the yearly profit of the organisation as a whole to purely meaningful projects around the globe — which may or may not be profitable — or we set up projects ourselves with a similar amount if we believe them to be more effective. We will do this in good and bad times of business.
 - c. We will regularly support meaningful not-for-profit projects through our network. Our management will review project proposals in this area on an individual project basis.
 - d. We will exercise a strong 'feedback culture' within the organisation to help each other stay true to the cause.
 - e. Our employees do not receive a 'top-down' target, instead they will be asked to write a 'meaning maker' statement based on their ambitions, strengths and capabilities. This document contains agreements with specific individuals that are relevant for success and will be updated on an annual basis.
 - f. We do not participate in projects that we do not consider to be meaningful.
2. We choose to view people — and their actions and intentions — in a positive light. We will meet people with compassion, and trust

that most people on this planet are aiming to contribute something positive and are in search for improved well-being. We commit to keeping this mind-set, even when faced with unfairness.

3. We work strengths-based, and utilise, respect and build on the strengths of each individual present in our network.
 - a. All project teams are selected on strengths-based criteria, meaning that all strengths (defined as the overlap between passion and performance) of team members are known to everybody and shared in every project meeting.
 - b. We provide strengths-based feedback to each other regularly in projects to help people develop their strengths further.
4. We choose to lead innovation proactively, rather than following it. We do this because we believe the world is changing more rapidly, and is more unpredictable than ever before.
 - a. We review, and re-design, the whole organisation every year. We understand that real change means reinventing yourself regularly, and asking for feedback from outside sources.
 - b. We provide all executives with time for meaningful innovation on a monthly basis. We believe in the 'slow down to speed up' credo, where real innovation only happens when people have the right information available and can therefore explore divergent opinions.
 - c. We work in a 'highly aligned, but loosely coupled' model, where different hubs and countries can exist largely independently, and are free to explore new ways of doing business.
5. We choose to share all information on the nature of positive organisations and individual well-being openly with everybody that has a need for it. We believe that — when it comes to the science of what makes us happier — there can be no 'intellectual property'.
 - a. We do not use terms like 'intellectual property', and will never charge a client money for the use of 'our material' — since they are in essence not ours. Our material is free for all to use.
 - b. We provide all people in the network (including clients) with all

the relevant information in the P+University and P+Innovation Center when they ask for it.

In short, we will create a role model for business that's truly meaningful, with the science of well-being at the core of how we work. We aspire to be a source of happiness for those around us, while remaining resilient, inspired and happy ourselves,

Yours sincerely,

Rens ter Weijde, Founder of Purpose+

NOTES

PROLOGUE: THE BIRTH OF PURPOSE+

- 1 Huppert, So (2011) *Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-being*
- 2 Haque (2011) *Betterness: Economics for Humans*
- 3 Frederic Laloux (2014) *Reinventing Organizations*
- 4 We even select people on a trait called 'radical optimism' in our organisation. We see it as not just a trait but also a choice and aspiration to view life in this way.
- 5 Two great things to read if you are interested: the deathbed statement of Wubbo Ockels (former astronaut) which you can find online, and the book *The Meaning of Human Existence*, by Edward Wilson (2014).
- 6 While writing this, I spoke to four CEOs who were quitting their jobs to do something meaningful. They told me they fully agreed with our message. I was thrilled to hear that.

1 WHY FOCUS ON WELL-BEING?

- 1 You can download this report for free from the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network website, under Resources, or search for the report online.
- 2 www.dayofhappiness.net
- 3 A summary of the *Nicomachean Ethics* can be found on the website www.sparknotes.com.
- 4 'Soul Has Weight, Physician Thinks'; *New York Times* (1910). Article can be found online.
- 5 Pim van Lommel (2010) *Consciousness beyond Life*
- 6 Maslow (1948) *A Theory of Human Motivation*
- 7 See for example the website www.ranker.com, where Da Vinci leads the Greatest Minds of all Time vote.
- 8 Mill (1863) *Utilitarianism*. A summary can be found on the website www.sparknotes.com.
- 9 Ekman, Friesen (1971) 'Constants across Cultures in the Face and Emotion'. Published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

- 10 Frijda (1987) *The Emotions* (Studies in Emotion and Social Interaction)
- 11 As explained in more detail in Daniel Kahneman's book (2013) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*
- 12 Davidson is, amongst other things, the founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds. Much of his research can be downloaded for free from their website.
- 13 Seligman (2006) *Learned Optimism*
- 14 Fredrickson (2004) *The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions*
- 15 Lyubomirsky (2008) *The How of Happiness*
- 16 DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, part of the US Department of Defense) has had a major impact on our world: it has, among other things, developed the first Internet and GPS. Also, Apple's current service, Siri, is based partly on DARPA research.
- 17 Davidson (2012) *The Emotional Life of Your Brain*
- 18 A good read covering Davidson's findings can be read in a *New York Times* article called, 'Happiness: Cajole Your Brain to Lean to the Left' (February, 2003)
- 19 www.trackyourhappiness.org is an example of an app to track your well-being, but lately many more apps have appeared on Apple's and Google's app stores.
- 20 UK Office for National Statistics (2014) *Commuting and Personal Well-being*
- 21 Source: New Economic Foundation. You can find more on their website: www.neweconomics.org
- 22 The satisfaction with life scale is available for free on our website: www.purposeplus.co.
- 23 Kahneman, Deaton (2010) *High Income Improves Evaluation of Life but not Emotional Well-being*. This effect is also called the 'Easterlin paradox', following an article by Richard A. Easterlin (2009) 'Happiness and Growth the World Over: Time Series Evidence on the Happiness-Income Paradox', which showed that income is not strongly related to life satisfaction.
- 24 Porrit (2005) *Capitalism As If the World Matters*
- 25 *The Economist* (2013) 'Money Can Buy Happiness'
- 26 *The Economist* (2014) 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'
- 27 www.gnhbhutan.org
- 28 Kahneman (2006) 'Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer?'
- 29 17% is based on Huppert, So (2011) *Flourishing across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-being*. Gallup-Healthways reported a similar number in their (2014) *State of Global Wellbeing* report, even though they use a different assessment method. Obviously, there are large differences between countries (e.g. 41% in Denmark, and just 10% in Slovakia) and measurements (other surveys show slightly higher scores, more on that in the next chapter).

30 Martin Seligman Forum on Depression; full speech available online.
 31 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data is for the US.
 32 *Harvard Business Review* (2014) 'Blue Ocean Leadership'
 33 Look at www.dayofhappiness.net, founded by the UN, where 87% of people
 say they would prioritise happiness and well-being over 'money and stuff'.
 34 www.cdc.gov
 35 www.cdc.gov/obesity/adult/causes/ for more information
 36 Quote by Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, on www.techcrunch.com.
 37 Perkins (1994) as mentioned in *Harvard Business Review*
 38 American Institute of Stress, together with The Marlin Company (telephone
 polling).
 39 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2013): N > 197,000 people, in over 70
 countries.
 40 This is a hypothesis: we don't know if Neanderthals were self-aware, and we're
 not yet sure if other species possess consciousness. Some scientists believe the
 Neanderthals may have been smarter than us, given their greater brain size.
 41 A quote with which Frank Drake, founder of SETI and one of the most
 respected people searching for extra-terrestrial life, would certainly disagree.
 42 Read Daniel Kahneman's (2013) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, for more informa-
 tion on this.
 43 Change can obviously only be achieved by large organisations like Philips,
 who were proud to serve more than a billion households (!) when I worked
 for them.
 44 Slogan used by Google.
 45 I'll explain what these measurements could be in the next chapter.
 46 This document can be downloaded for free online, and comes highly recom-
 mended.
 47 Wilson (2014) *The Meaning of Human Existence*
 48 Note: most of these can be found for free on our website:
www.purposeplus.com.
 49 You can visit the database, and much of the scientific findings on happiness,
 through www.worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl
 50 Concept derived from the book *Blue Ocean Strategy* (2005) by Kim and
 Mauborgne.
 51 Sources: *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology* (2011); Pryce-Jones
 (2010) *Happiness at Work: Maximizing your Psychological Capital for Success*;
The Oxford Handbook of Happiness (2013); Cameron, Spreitzer (2011) *The*
Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship
 52 Gallup-Healthways, data accessible online.

- 53 Ban Ki-Moon called for ‘revolutionary action’ to achieve sustainable development. He described the heedless consumption of resources as a ‘global suicide pact’. www.unep.org.

2 WHAT MAKES US DO WELL?

- 1 I strongly recommend that, if you’re interested in this topic, you search for these experts’ work online. Most of their articles can be read for free, since they intend to spread the knowledge.
- 2 More on how to do this will follow later in this book in the pragmatic chapters, both for you and your organisation.
- 3 The category of ‘positive emotions’ can be considered as the oldest element in happiness research, since it’s likely to be the most obvious one for most people: feeling good has to be part of happiness. The category essentially checks what emotions you experience in your daily life. Examples of positive emotions include gratitude, contentment, bliss, inspired, joyful, serenity, ecstasy and being awestruck. A great 3-minute movie recently made about experiencing ‘awe’ is *The Biological Advantage of Being Awestruck*, on Vimeo.
- 4 Relationships are so essential to humanity that many biologists see them as the core of who we are, and how we got to where we are today. Some scientists consider humans to be one of the ‘eusocial’ species, where the members of the group cooperate across multiple generations to rear the young. Out of hundreds of thousands of evolving lines of animals in the past 400 million years, this pattern has only arisen roughly 20 times in the history of the Earth. In such groups, social structures are extremely important, and life in our ancestors’ villages could easily be considered a nonstop game of social chess, where assessments of who’s who were extremely important (taken from Wilson [2014] *The Meaning of Human Existence*). To this day, we find that humans are extremely social and that experienced social support is one of the most important factors in assessing mental health.
- 5 In Kahneman et al. (2004) *A Survey Method for Characterizing Daily Life Experience: The Day Reconstruction Method*, researchers found that when they asked people to systematically rate their daily events on ‘positivity’ and ‘negativity’ scales, the activities ‘intimate relations’ and ‘socializing’ came top. ‘Commuting’ came at the bottom as the activity that people like least.
- 6 There are at least two levels of experiencing meaning/purpose; ‘personalised meaning’, and ‘meaning on the larger scale of things’. In my experience, people often find it difficult to define what’s meaningful in their lives when they only see the ‘large scale’ category. For example, it’s easy to see how you contribute to the beauty of the lives of people close to you, but less easy to see how you are helping to ensure our species will exist in the future. In order to

- circumvent this difficulty in language, the Japanese have invented a word that stresses personal meaning through ‘the things you wake up for’: *ikigai*.
- 7 Note: the PERMA Profiler survey was developed by Julie Butler and Margaret L. Kern, University of Pennsylvania. It can be accessed for free on our website: www.purposeplus.com
 - 8 Hone et al. (2014) *Measuring Flourishing: The Impact of Operational Definitions on the Prevalence of High Levels of Well-being*
 - 9 *Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-being* (2011)
 - 10 Hone et al. (2014) *Measuring Flourishing: The Impact of Operational Definitions on the Prevalence of High Levels of Well-being*
 - 11 Check, for example, the Legatum Prosperity Index Rankings (2014, available online), where New Zealand was number three on the list, after Norway and Switzerland. On the UN Happiness Index they are number 13 out of 156.
 - 12 This principle is known as the Pareto Principle, who showed that 80% of the land was owned by 20% of the population, and found similar ratios in other areas as well. In business, it is well known that 80% of your revenue comes from 20% of your clients. It is also often used to strengthen productivity in consultants: 20% of the work usually leads to 80% of the impact.
 - 13 There are actually two separate types of cell division, the other one is called meiosis. Meiosis is the type of cell division that produces egg and sperm cells.
 - 14 It is not surprising that the Human Genome Project took so long when you consider that the human genome has 3.3 billion base-pairs.
 - 15 Heritability: the proportion of observed differences in a trait (feature of a living organism) that is due to genetics. Other factors that influence traits are the environment and randomness.
 - 16 Bouchard et al. (1990) ‘Sources of Human Psychological Differences: The Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart’
 - 17 There are many odd things related to this lack of causality, and therefore lack of explanatory value, in correlational research. One site to visit with regard to this is www.tylervigen.com, which shows strange correlations between completely unrelated features (e.g. the number of people who drowned by falling into a swimming pool correlates strongly with the number of movies Nicolas Cage has appeared in).
 - 18 The Big Five are five broad dimensions used in psychology to describe human personalities.
 - 19 Lyubomirsky (2010) *The How of Happiness*
 - 20 The word ‘emotion’ comes from the Latin verb ‘movere’, to move.
 - 21 I was challenged on this notion when I spoke to Google engineers, who told me that epigenetics — where scientists work to influence gene expression —

- may soon change this story quite significantly. I agree that it might, but this is hypothetical thinking at the moment.
- 22 Clark et al. (2003) 'Lags and Leads in Life Satisfaction: A Test of the Baseline Hypothesis'
 - 23 Visit www.dnalc.org for a more detailed understanding of this gene and others associated with depression and other mental disorders.
 - 24 Arias-Carron, Pöppel (2007) *Dopamine, Learning and Reward-seeking Behavior*; Wise (1996) *Addictive Drugs and Brain Stimulation Reward*. Also, the more accessible book Breuning (2012) *Meet Your Happy Chemicals*
 - 25 This logic comes from Sonja Lyubomirsky, whose books I highly recommend, and this particular concept is known as the happiness formula.
 - 26 See paragraph 1.2.
 - 27 Gilbert (2007) *Stumbling on Happiness*
 - 28 'The Surprising Science of Happiness' by Daniel Gilbert, www.ted.com
 - 29 Schkade, Kahneman (1998) 'Does Living in California Make People Happy? A Focusing Illusion in Judgments of Life Satisfaction'
 - 30 Wilson, Gilbert (2005) *Affective Forecasting: Knowing What to Want*
 - 31 There is a special research group dedicated to this topic: The Post-traumatic Growth Research Group at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
 - 32 Walburg (2009) *Mentaal Vermogen* (Dutch); Lucas (2007) 'Adaptation and the Set-point Model of Subjective Well-being — Does Happiness Change After Major Life Events?'; Wildeman, Turney, Schnittker (2014) 'The Hedonic Consequences of Punishment Revisited'
 - 33 UK Office of National Statistics (2013) *Measuring National Well-being, What Matters Most to Personal Well-being?*
 - 34 Frijters, Johnston, Shields (2011) 'Destined for (Un)Happiness: Does Childhood Predict Adult Life Satisfaction?'
 - 35 Brickman, Campbell (1971) *Hedonic Relativism and Planning the Good Society*
 - 36 7.5 is also how Dutch people on average rate themselves on happiness on a scale of 1 to 10, according to the 2013 UN *Happiness Report*, making us Dutchies the 4th happiest country on the planet, only trailing Denmark (1), Norway (2) and Switzerland (3).
 - 37 Blanchflower, Oswald (2000) *Well-being Over Time in Britain and the USA*
 - 38 Ridley (2011) *The Rational Optimist*
 - 39 Ibid.
 - 40 Ibid.
 - 41 Ibid.
 - 42 Examples are Airbnb, Xiaomi, Groupon, Dropbox, Spotify, Pinterest, which are all collectively valued at multiple billions at the time of writing.

- 43 www.internetlivestats.com shows that we had the first billion humans online in 2005, the second billion in 2010, and the third billion in 2014. It is expected that in the next eight years, three billion more people will be coming online.
- 44 Diamandis (2012) *Abundance — The Future Is Better Than You Think*
- 45 Steven Pinker (2007) *A History of Violence*
- 46 Note: Wikipedia has an extensive list of cognitive biases http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_bias.
- 47 Kahneman, Knetsch, Thaler (1991) 'Anomalies: The Endowment Effect, Loss Aversion, and Status Quo Bias'
- 48 Baumeister (2001) *Bad is Stronger Than Good*
- 49 Vaish, Grossmann, Woodward (2008) 'Not All Emotions Are Created Equal: The Negativity Bias in Social-emotional Development'
- 50 Fiske (1980) 'Attention and Weight in Person Perception: The Impact of Negative and Extreme Behavior'
- 51 Thomas, Diener (1990) 'Memory Accuracy in the Recall of Emotions'
- 52 Klein (1991) 'Negativity Effects in Impression Formation: A Test in the Political Arena'
- 53 Plous (1993) *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*
- 54 Kahneman et al. (2006) 'Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion'

3 HOW TO FLOURISH

- 1 For a more elaborate definition please see Chapter 2 of this book.
- 2 Scientific backing is crucial. Once you start looking for 'ways to become happier' you'll find hundreds of tips and many 'life change' testimonials, but they often suffer from a lack of scientific validation. In my view, when it comes to mental well-being, scientific evidence for interventions is essential.
- 3 It can also be addictive. I wrote my thesis on this to graduate in psychology. But I still believe this is probably the best addiction to have in life.
- 4 Moore et al. (2012) 'Leisure Time Physical Activity of Moderate to Vigorous Intensity and Mortality: A Large Pooled Cohort Analysis'
- 5 Harvard School of Public Health: *The Benefits of Physical Activity* (available online)
- 6 Health, United States, 2013
- 7 Pratt, Macera, Wang (2000) 'Higher Direct Medical Costs Associated with Physical Inactivity'
- 8 The Borgen Project (available online)
- 9 Guskowska (2004) 'Effects of Exercise on Anxiety, Depression and Mood'

- 10 Callaghan (2004) 'Exercise, a Neglected Intervention in Mental Health Care?'
- 11 Van Praag, Kempermann, Gage (1999) 'Running Increases Cell Proliferation and Neurogenesis in the Adult Mouse Dentate Gyrus'
- 12 Hillman et al. (2014) 'Effects of the FITKids Randomized Controlled Trial on Executive Control and Brain Function'
- 13 Ratey (2013) *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*
- 14 Sharma, Madaan, Petty (2006) *Exercise for Mental Health*
- 15 A great book about Henry Molaison is by Corkin (2013) *Permanent Present Tense: The Unforgettable Life of the Amnesic Patient, H.M.*
- 16 Vuckovic et al. (2010) 'Exercise Elevates Dopamine D2 Receptor in a Mouse Model of Parkinson's Disease: In-vivo Imaging with [18F] Fallypride'
- 17 Source: University of Mississippi Medical Center online; Physical Exercise — Epinephrine
- 18 Young (2007) 'How to Increase Serotonin in the Human Brain Without Drugs'
- 19 Goldfarb et al. (1990) 'Plasma Beta-endorphin Concentration: Response to Intensity and Duration of Exercise'
- 20 Note that the 7-minute workout is now receiving a lot of attention; but this is unlikely to be very beneficial. Most of these workouts also advocate multiple rounds (3, e.g.), which makes it longer anyway. However, a little movement is always better than no movement.
- 21 When Annelie Pompe, former world record holder in freediving (to 126m with a single breath) and climber of Mount Everest, explains how she approached Everest, she makes one point clear. She knew she wanted to climb Everest and asked herself, 'What do I need?' In her words, she ended up with the best to-do list ever, which included climbing many other summits, learning to meditate, learning to endure extreme temperatures and staying awake for several days.
- 22 Yang et al. (2014) 'Sleep Promotes Branch-specific Formation of Dendritic Spines after Learning'
- 23 Walker (2009) *Sleep and Cognition II: Memory*
- 24 Steptoe et al. (2008) 'Positive Affect, Psychological Well-being, and Good Sleep'
- 25 McClusky (2014) *Faster, Higher, Stronger: How Sports Science Is Creating a New Generation of Superathletes — and What We Can Learn from Them*
- 26 Schoenborn, Adams (2010) *Health Behaviors of Adults: United States, 2005–2007*. National Center for Health Statistics
- 27 www.sleepfoundation.org
- 28 *Harvard Business Review* (2011) 'Sleep Deprivation's True Workplace Costs'

- 29 Kahneman et al. (2004) 'A Survey Method for Characterizing Daily Life Experience: The Day Reconstruction Method'
- 30 Crick, Mitchison (1983) *The Function of Dream Sleep*
- 31 Walker (2009) *Sleep and Cognition* II: Memory
- 32 Payne et al. (2012) 'Memory for Semantically Related and Unrelated Declarative Information: The benefit of Sleep, the Cost of Wake'
- 33 Takahashi, Kipnis, Daughaday (1968) 'Growth Hormone Secretion during Sleep'
- 34 Wolters Kluwer Pharma Solutions, 'Slow-Wave Sleep: Beyond Insomnia'
- 35 T-shirt slogan by The Coffee Company, the Netherlands
- 36 Abassi et al. (2012) 'The Effect of Magnesium Supplementation on Primary Insomnia in Elderly: A Double-blind Placebo-controlled Clinical Trial'
- 37 To give you an example of how this works for top athletes, a former Dutch fencing champion used to do the same exercise with a 3:20 ratio just before his important matches. The trick is to never force yourself into anything, in the end the goal is just to relax quicker and deeper. This, of course, can also be combined with a hot bath, which also helps your muscles relax more deeply.
- 38 Source: Verburgh (2012) *De Voedselzandloper* (Dutch)
- 39 Note: I have experimented extensively with these methods in the past, both on myself and with clients, and I have seen great results.
- 40 Harvard School of Public Health, the Harvard Food Pyramid
- 41 Lin, Su (2007) 'A Meta-Analytic Review of Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Trials of Antidepressant Efficacy of Omega-3 Fatty Acids'
- 42 Harvard School of Public Health, Fiber
- 43 Rimm et al. (1996) 'Vegetable, Fruit and Cereal Fiber Intake and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease among Men'
- 44 Brown et al. (1999) 'Cholesterol-lowering Effects of Dietary Fiber: A Meta-analysis'
- 45 Weindruch et al. (1986) 'The Retardation of Aging in Mice by Dietary Restriction: Longevity, Cancer, Immunity and Lifetime Energy Intake'
- 46 Colman et al. (2014) 'Caloric Restriction Reduces Age-Related and All-cause Mortality in Rhesus Monkeys'
- 47 Red meat also includes bacon, hot dogs, sausage and salami, and is linked to all-cause mortality and certain forms of cancer.
- 48 Pan et al. (2012) 'Red Meat Consumption and Mortality: Results from Two Prospective Cohort Studies'
- 49 Taubert, Roesen, Schömig (2007) 'Effect of Cocoa and Tea Intake on Blood Pressure: A Meta-analysis'
- 50 Guillen-Casla et al. (2012) 'Determination of Serotonin and its Precursors in Chocolate Samples by Capillary Liquid Chromatography with Mass Spectrometry Detection'

- 51 Harvard Health Publications (2005) *They're Good for Us, but Which Nut is the Best? The Family Health Guide*
- 52 Bongoni et al. (2014) 'Evaluation of Different Cooking Conditions on Broccoli to Improve the Nutritional Value and Consumer Acceptance'
- 53 Greater Good Initiative by Berkeley University
- 54 You can find the Gratitude Warrior courses on www.kindspring.org. Note that all participants on the website can host courses, so scientific validation cannot be guaranteed.
- 55 Emmons, Mishra (2010) *Why Gratitude Enhances Well-being: What We Know, What We Need to Know*
- 56 Source: Berkeley Greater Good Initiative website, where a lot of research is summarised. Comes highly recommended.
- 57 Explanation: grateful individuals are less likely to engage in upward social comparisons that can result in envy or resentment.
- 58 Baumeister et al. (2003) 'Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?'
- 59 Pressman, Cohen (2012) 'Positive Emotion Words and Longevity in Famous Deceased Psychologists'
- 60 Kraft, Pressman (2012) 'Relationships between Emotional Words Used in Love Songs and Singer Longevity'
- 61 Snowden (2001) *Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier and More Meaningful Lives*
- 62 Baumeister et al. (2001) 'Bad Is Stronger than Good'
- 63 Wood, Froh, Geraghty (2010) 'Gratitude and Well-being: A Review and Theoretical Integration'
- 64 Seligman, Steens (2005) 'Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions.' Their research shows that the 'three good things' exercise affects people for more than 6 months when they do it for a week.
- 65 Gander et al. (2012) 'Strengths-based Positive Interventions: Further Evidence for Their Potential in Enhancing Well-being and Alleviating Depression'
- 66 Emmons, McCullough (2003) 'Counting Blessings versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-being in Daily Life.' This study compared people who wrote down five things they were grateful for every week for ten weeks, to people who wrote down five daily hassles or neutral events from the previous week. The grateful events people's record included 'sunset through the clouds', 'the chance to be alive' and 'the generosity of friends'. Hassles included things like 'taxes', 'parking space' and 'burned my macaroni and cheese'. The grateful group scored 25% better on well-being afterwards.

- 67 Seligman et al. (2005) 'Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions'; Gander et al. (2012) 'Strengths-based Positive Interventions: Further Evidence for Their Potential in Enhancing Well-being and Alleviating Depression'
- 68 You can find this app on www.thnx4.org. It's free to use.
- 69 Goyal et al. (2013) 'Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis'
- 70 Davidson et al. (2003) 'Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation'
- 71 Keng, Smoski, Robins (2011) 'Effects of Mindfulness on Psychological Health: A Review of Empirical Studies'
- 72 Carson et al. (2004) 'Mindfulness-based Relationship Enhancement'
- 73 More information on mindfulness and schools in Greater Good Foundation, Berkeley (2007) 'Mindful Kids, Peaceful Schools'
- 74 Samuelson et al. (2007) 'Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction in Massachusetts Correctional Facilities'
- 75 Harvard Health Publications (2011) 'Mindful Eating May Help with Weight Loss'. Available online.
- 76 McCullough, Worthington, Rachal (1997) 'Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships'
- 77 Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, Finkel (2008) 'Open Hearts Build Lives: Positive Emotions, Induced Through Loving-Kindness Meditation, Build Consequential Personal Resources'
- 78 Matthieu Ricard has a TED Talk that you can watch, and wrote a book called *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*
- 79 In Buddhism, compassion for the self and others is the same construct, unlike in our Western languages where compassion is usually focused on others.
- 80 You can download the meditations used for the research by Richard Davidson for free from the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds' website.
- 81 Weng et al. (2013) 'Compassion Training Alters Altruism and Neural Responses to Suffering'
- 82 Brewer et al. (2011) 'Meditation Experience is Associated with Differences in Default Mode Network Activity and Connectivity'
- 83 There is a good scientific talk on the vagus nerve by Dacher Keltner ('Secrets of the Vagus Nerve'), available through the Berkeley Greater Good Center website.
- 84 In fact, universal suffering is so core to Buddhism that it is the first of the Four Noble Truths, considered by many to be the cornerstone of Buddhism. The Four Noble Truths state that there is suffering (*dukkha* in Sanskrit), that the origin for suffering lies in our craving for things to be how we want them

to be, and that there is a way to alleviate suffering, called the Noble Eightfold Path.

- 85 This is a hypothesis, which I don't believe has been scientifically validated in a proper way. I feel that older psychologists would probably agree (since they are trained to resolve issues first, before moving on to the rest), but that positive psychologists might well argue that positivity is a way to cure the negativity as well. More research in this area is needed. Luckily Tayyab Rashid (University of Toronto) is therefore experimenting with positive psychotherapy to learn more.
- 86 Thanks to Louis Dell for a great insight into my forgiveness process!
- 87 In many schools of mediation, the cultivation of compassion, aimed at the self and others, is a key practice to forgive people who have hurt us.
- 88 Rashid, Anjum (2008) *Positive Psychotherapy for Young Adults and Children*
- 89 McCullough, Root, Cohen (2006) 'Writing about the Benefits of an Interpersonal Transgression Facilitates Forgiveness'
- 90 Rye, Pargament (2002) 'Forgiveness and romantic relationships in college: Can it heal the wounded heart?'; Wade, Worthington (2005) 'In Search of a Common Core: A Content Analysis of Interventions To Promote Forgiveness'
- 91 Enright (2001) *Forgiveness Is a Choice*. There is also a great review of all the interventions tested on people, done by Wade and Worthington (2005) 'In Search of a Common Core: A Content Analysis of Interventions to Promote Forgiveness'. This article can be downloaded for free online.
- 92 Christakis, Fowler (2008) 'Dynamic Spread of Happiness in a Large Social Network: Longitudinal Analysis over 20 years in the Framingham Heart Study'
- 93 Cacioppo, Fowler, Christakis (2009) 'Alone in the Crowd: The Structure and Spread of Loneliness in a Large Social Network'
- 94 Christakis, Fowler (2008) 'The Collective Dynamics of Smoking in a Large Social Network'
- 95 Wilson, Sober (2004) 'Reintroducing Group Selection to the Human Behavioral Sciences'
- 96 Rutledge et al. (2014) 'A Computational and Neural Model of Momentary Subjective Well-being'
- 97 We do an exercise called 'peak experience' in our courses, where people reflect on the most beautiful moment they had in the last 12 months. These moments, we have found, are almost always social in nature. See Technique 12 later in this chapter.
- 98 www.randomactsofkindness.org
- 99 Peterson (2006) *Living by the Golden Rule: Positive Psychology Exercises for the Workplace*; Gander et al. (2012) 'Strengths-based Positive Interventions:

- Further Evidence for Their Potential in Enhancing Well-being and Alleviating Depression'
- 100 Peterson (2006) *Living by the Golden Rule: Positive Psychology Exercises for the Workplace*
- 101 Seligman, Diener (2002) *Very Happy People*
- 102 Best, Maktelow, Taylor (2014) 'Online Communication, Social Media and Adolescent Well-being: A Systematic Narrative Review'
- 103 Sabatini, Sarracino (2014) 'Online Networks and Subjective Well-being'
- 104 Reinecke, Trepte (2014) 'Authenticity and Well-being on Social Network Sites: A Two-wave Longitudinal Study on the Effects of Online Authenticity and the Positivity Bias in SNS Communication'
- 105 Based on calculations by Robin Dunbar, a British anthropologist, who found a correlation between primate brain size and average social group size.
- 106 People you would contact to discuss important matters with, confidants.
- 107 McPherson et al. (2006) 'Social Isolation in America: Changes in Core Discussion Networks over Two Decades'
- 108 Helliwell, Huang (2013) 'Comparing the Happiness Effects of Real and Online Friends'
- 109 Gable, Reis (2010) *Good News! Capitalizing on Positive Events in an Interpersonal Context*
- 110 Buehlman, Gottman, Katz (1992) 'How a Couple Views Their Past Predicts Their Future'
- 111 This model is copyrighted by the Gottman Institute and can be found online.
- 112 One of my strengths is the 'love of learning'. I thoroughly enjoy learning something new, especially when it is powerful enough to change my views. Fields I like to explore most are physics, astronomy, psychology and corporate strategy. I usually record all the learning in a large Excel file so I can quickly review them when needed.
- 113 Seligman, Steen (2005) 'Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions'; CAPP 'Why Strengths? The Evidence'; Gallup research on strengths through the strengths.gallup.com website.
- 114 For an elaborate story on strengths, and how to use or classify them, read Peterson, Seligman (2004) *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*.
- 115 Gander et al. (2012) 'Strengths-based Positive Interventions: Further Evidence for Their Potential in Enhancing Well-being and Alleviating Depression'
- 116 When people join Purpose+, they have to hand in their own 'meaning maker story'. Based on that, we'll help them design the ideal role.
- 117 We have seen many beautiful things happen in these presentations. Some people chose to show up with PowerPoint presentations, others with draw-

- ings, and some others again with nothing. I have even seen presentations where the room was changed completely and everybody ended up lying on the floor.
- 118 Sheldon, Lyubomirsky (2006) 'How to Increase and Sustain Positive Emotion: The Effects of Expressing Gratitude and Visualizing Best Possible Selves'
- 119 Locke et al. (1981) 'Goal Setting and Task Performance: 1969–1980'
- 120 Sheldon et al. (2004) 'Self-concordance and Subjective Well-being in Four Cultures'
- 121 Street et al. (2004) 'Understanding the Relationships between Well-being, Goal-setting and Depression in Children'
- 122 Sheldon, Houser-Marko (2001) 'Self-concordance, Goal Attainment, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Can there be an upward Spiral?'
- 123 You may of course choose more than one goal if you're up for it, or change the timeline (two years, three years). Personally, I have a document called my Adventure List, which includes all my goals for the next few years on a timeline. It works as a powerful motivator for me.
- 124 SMART stands for: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.
- 125 I borrowed this technique from a colleague at McKinsey & Company who used it to prepare an Olympic rowing match with his team, and I have been using it ever since with management teams to help them truly commit during strategy sessions.
- 126 These factors do indeed correlate with 'success' in life, especially when you equate success with financial well-being over time.
- 127 Self-regulation is a key factor in success, and was made popular by Roy Baumeister in his (2012) book *Willpower: Rediscovering the Greatest Human Strength*.
- 128 Gottfredson (1997) *Why g Matters: The Complexity of Everyday Life*
- 129 Search for the Terman Study of the Gifted to find out everything about longitudinal studies done on people with high IQs. The study began in 1921 and runs to this day. The study has shown that 'gifted' children (with an IQ of 151 or above) had normal personalities, did well socially and academically and had lower divorce rates later in life. They were also generally successful in life and physically better developed. The study has been criticised for including mainly white people from good socio-economic backgrounds.
- 130 Watch Angela Duckworth explain her story about grit in a TED Talk: 'The Key to Success? Grit.'
- 131 Duckworth et al. (2007) *Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-term Goals*
- 132 Duckworth, Seligman (2005) 'Self-discipline Outdoes IQ in Predicting Academic Performance of Adolescents'
- 133 Average life expectancy at birth in 2010 according to the CIA World Factbook.

- 134 Wubbo Ockels, one of the few astronauts this world has known, gave a speech just before he died, where he described that the purpose of life is 'to sustain life'.
- 135 Although there is no evidence for a life after death, I know that even the most intelligent scientists would welcome good news on this front. Even Richard Feynman, one of the greatest theoretical physicists of all time — mostly interested in facts of course — kept the door open to other explanations in his letter to his deceased wife Arline. He wrote the letter for her after she died, and he explained that he adored her. The letter ends with: 'P.S. Please excuse my not mailing this — but I don't know your new address.'
- 136 Quoidbach et al. (2010) 'Positive Emotion Regulation and Well-being: Comparing the Impact of Eight Savoring and Dampening Strategies'
- 137 Wood, Heimpel, Michela (2003) 'Savoring versus Dampening: Self-esteem Differences in Regulating Positive Affect'
- 138 Bryant, Smart, King (2005) 'Using the Past to Enhance the Present: Boosting Happiness through Positive Reminiscence'
- 139 Edmondson, MacLeod (2014) 'Psychological Well-being and Anticipated Positive Personal Events: Their Relationship to Depression'
- 140 Gable et al. (2004) 'What Do You Do When Things Go Right? The Intra-personal and Interpersonal Benefits of Sharing Positive Events'

4 HOW TO CREATE FLOURISHING ORGANISATIONS

- 1 In fact, I cannot mention a single organisation that has truly embedded the science of happiness in all aspects of their business, but I can name a few companies that are doing particularly well: Google is strong on its positive people analytics and actively tries to connect individual purpose to the purpose of the organisation; Zappos has embodied a culture where happiness can be measured and openly discussed; and McKinsey & Company has embraced strengths-based development in their people strategy for consultants.
- 2 This type of engagement is different from well-being: it is more a measurement used for management instead of the individual and reflects person-job fit more than personal well-being.
- 3 Huppert, So (2011) 'Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-being'
- 4 Cameron, Bright, Caza (2004) 'Exploring the Relationships Between Organizational Virtuousness and Performance'; Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, Calarco (2011) 'Effects of Positive Practices on Organizational Effectiveness'; Gittell et al. (2006) 'Relationships, Layoffs and Organizational Resilience'; Cameron (2013) *Practicing Positive Leadership*
- 5 Gittell et al. (2006) 'Relationships, Layoffs, and Organizational Resilience'

- 6 Owens, Baker, Cameron (2013) 'Relational Energy at Work: Establishing Construct, Nomological, and Predictive Validity'
- 7 Cameron, Dutton, Quinn (2003) *Positive Organizational Scholarship – Foundations of a New Discipline*
- 8 Pixar has central places in the office where it's natural for people to meet. For more information read Jonathan Lehrer's book (2012) *Imagine: How Creativity Works*.
- 9 Taken from a presentation by Kim Cameron, University of Michigan.
- 10 The ratio mentioned here, known as the Losada ratio, is now challenged by some other researchers in the field, notably Nick Brown. Criticism can be found in Brown, Friedman (2014) *The Persistence of Wishful Thinking*
- 11 Cameron, Bright, Caza (2004) 'Exploring the Relationships Between Organizational Virtuousness and Performance'
- 12 Gallup, *State of the American Workplace* report
- 13 *Harvard Business Review* (2014) 'Blue Ocean Leadership'; Purpose+ team
- 14 Piketty (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*
- 15 *Living Planet Report* (2014)
- 16 A good read from the UN is (2012) *Defining a New Economic Paradigm* – the report of a high-level meeting on well-being and happiness, plus the UN *Happiness Report* (2013).
- 17 Haque (2011) *Betterness – Economics for Humans*
- 18 Urahn (2012) *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations*
- 19 Brookings Institute (2007) 'Economic Mobility of Families across Generations' (available online)
- 20 Source: Tal Ben-Shahar lectures on leadership.
- 21 The slogan we use is still, 'We help people, organisations and societies to flourish'.
- 22 We have rules for Purpose+Charity: the initiatives we fund should provide exponential impact to society. A great example we're currently involved in is Purpose+Prison, done in collaboration with Young in Prison and Young Happy Minds, where we collectively train 450 young prisoners in positive psychology.
- 23 Simon Sinek on TED: 'Start with Why'.
- 24 *The Economist* wrote about it in an article called 'Triple Bottom Line', in November 2009. Elkington also wrote a book on the subject (1999) *Cannibals with Forks: Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*.
- 25 Naim (2014) *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used to Be*
- 26 I do not know of any other companies that have a clear formula for this, but there are quite a few organisations working in sustainability that do. A

great example is the Happy Planet Index, where the formula is: (experienced well-being x life expectancy)/ecological footprint. Even more impressive is the OECD Better Life Index, which has 10 variables that affect quality of life (life satisfaction, housing, education, etc.) and where you can make your own formula by rating the individual topics according to how important you consider them to be.

- 27 Kim Cameron told me that the tool is copyrighted in order to make sure that it's used in the right way.
- 28 Baumeister et al. (2001) 'Bad Is Stronger than Good'
- 29 Measured through a positive practices survey that includes dimensions of caring, compassionate support, forgiveness, inspiration, meaning and respect, integrity and gratitude. Questions per dimension can be found in the research paper Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, Calarco (2010) 'Effects of Positive Practices on Organizational Effectiveness'
- 30 Cameron et al. (2010) 'Effects of Positive Practices on Organizational Effectiveness'
- 31 Edmans (2012) 'The Link between Job Satisfaction and Firm Value, With Implications for Corporate Social Responsibility'; Edmans (2011) 'Does the Stock Market Fully Value Intangibles? Employee Satisfaction and Equity Prices'
- 32 Terminology from THNK, School of Creative Leadership, Amsterdam
- 33 If you haven't seen these speeches, I strongly recommend that you do. They are great examples of effective storytelling, and show a powerful belief to make the world better.
- 34 Davis (1971) *That's Interesting!*
- 35 Cameron (2013) *Practicing Positive Leadership*; McKinsey Centered Leadership
- 36 Source: McKinsey's Organization Practice.
- 37 Locke et al. (1981) 'Goal Setting and Task Performance: 1969–1980'
- 38 Goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.
- 39 Cameron, Lavine (2006) *Making the Impossible Possible: Leading Extraordinary Performance — The Rocky Flats Story*; Cameron (2013) *Practicing Positive Leadership*
- 40 To review this again, check the study done by Huppert, So (2011) 'Flourishing Across Europe: Application of a New Conceptual Framework for Defining Well-being, or the UN Happiness Report' (2013), or the OECD Better Life Index.
- 41 Owens, Baker, Cameron (2013) 'Relational Energy at Work: Establishing Construct, Nomological, and Predictive Validity'
- 42 We're now, for the first time, entering a programme for around 3,000 people where we will most likely use big data based on actual behaviour. In a future

- version of the book, I'll be able to tell you more about the benefits and challenges of this approach.
- 43 Cameron, Bright, Caza (2004) 'Exploring the Relationships between Organizational Virtuousness and Performance'; Cameron et al. (2011) 'Effects of Positive Practices on Organisational Effectiveness'; Gittell et al. (2006) 'Relationships, Layoffs and Organizational Resilience'; Cameron (2013) *Practicing Positive Leadership*; Edmans (2012) 'The Link between Job Satisfaction and Firm Value, With Implications for Corporate Social Responsibility'; Edmans (2011) 'Does the Stock Market Fully Value Intangibles? Employee Satisfaction and Equity Prices'. McKinsey & Company has similar research pointing to the value of both performance and health, with similar conclusions.
 - 44 Source: iOpener Institute.
 - 45 Google's example. For more information about the rules surrounding the Meaning Team technique, check the recent Forbes article about it, called Google's Best New Innovation: Rules Around '20% Time'.
 - 46 www.hackday.org, much about this can also be found on Wikipedia
 - 47 Much can be found online about ShipIt days, including experimentation at Atlassian with the 20% rule.
 - 48 Dutton, Ragins (2007) 'Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation'
 - 49 Losada, Heaphy (2004) 'The Role of Positivity and Connectivity in the Performance of Business Teams'
 - 50 Cameron (2013) *Practicing Positive Leadership*
 - 51 Internal McKinsey research showed that the single most powerful variable predicting high performance in teams was whether they 'helped their team mates improve over time' through regular feedback.
 - 52 McKinsey's research on culture change.
 - 53 Pentland (2014) *Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread — The Lessons from a New Science*
 - 54 McKinsey Organization Practice; Keller, Price (2011) *Beyond Performance*
 - 55 McKinsey Quarterly Transformational Change Survey, January 2010
 - 56 Baker (2011) 'A Dual Model of Reciprocity in Organizations: Moral Sentiments and Reputation', chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* (2011) by Cameron and Spreitzer
 - 57 Lehrer (2012) *Imagine: How Creativity Works*; plussing means providing feedback in the 'yes, and...' way instead of 'yes, but...' You are allowed to kill ideas, but only when you can make them better.
 - 58 Baker's wife, Cheryl Baker, has a company that sells products like the Reciprocity Ring, it can be found on www.humaxnetworks.com.
 - 59 A great book on this notion is *Give and Take*, by Adam Grant (2013).
 - 60 www.humaxnetworks.com

- 61 MSW Research in collaboration with Dale Carnegie Training
- 62 Towers Perrin (2003) 'Understanding What Drives Employee Engagement'
- 63 Towers Perrin (2003) 'Understanding What Drives Employee Engagement'
- 64 Estimates done by Gallup, Towers Perrin, and the Corporate Executive Board show very similar numbers. In general, they find only around 10–20% of people are highly committed. Most people, roughly 70%, are 'moderately engaged', or 'agnostics', and there's another 10–20% who are 'disengaged'.
- 65 Pryce-Jones (2010) *Happiness at Work: Maximizing your Psychological Capital for Success*
- 66 He wrote a number of books on the topic, including *The Strengths Book: Be Confident, Be Successful, and Enjoy Better Relationships by Realising the Best of You* (2010) and *Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others* (2008).
- 67 Gallup's Strengths Finder uses a different categorisation of strengths than the VIA survey. Gallup strengths are divided into four domains: executing, influencing, relationship building, strategic thinking. I have also seen matrices with performance on one axis and happiness, or positive energy, on another.
- 68 Zald, Mattson, Pardo (2001) 'Brain Activity in Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex Correlates with Individual Differences in Negative Affect'; Urry et al. (2006) 'Amygdala and Ventromedial Prefrontal Cortex Are Inversely Coupled during Regulation of Negative Affect and Predict the Diurnal Pattern of Cortisol Secretion among Older Adults'
- 69 Gabelica et al. (2014) 'The Effect of Team Feedback and Guided Reflexivity on Team Performance Change'
- 70 Heifetz, Linsky (2002) *Leadership on the Line*
- 71 Note there are a lot of fake studies around on the Internet — like the 'Harvard written goals study', and '1953 Yale Goal Study'. Both never happened, but have been quoted by many writers.
- 72 Based on experience with transformation programmes for organisations. I haven't seen a single organisation that did not mention entrepreneurship in the profile for their ideal employees.
- 73 Pentland (2014) *Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread — The Lessons from a New Science*
- 74 Cooperrider, Whitney (2001) *A Positive Revolution in Change*
- 75 Cooperrider, Srivastva (1987) *Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life*
- 76 Gabelica et al. (2014) 'The Effect of Team Feedback and Guided Reflexivity on Team Performance Change'
- 77 Argyris (1991) *Teaching Smart People How to Learn*
- 78 These techniques seem surprisingly simple, and they are. However, I have seen that they are very effective in complex corporate environments like Philips, or McKinsey & Company. Their complexity lies not in the difficulty of the

- technique, but in adhering to the technique over time, especially when feeling stressed.
- 79 Kahneman et al. (1993) 'When More Pain Is Preferred to Less: Adding a Better End'; Redelmeier, Kahneman (1996) 'Patients' Memories of Painful Medical Treatments: Real-time and Retrospective Evaluations of Two Minimally Invasive Procedures'
 - 80 This is called the Zeigarnik effect. A lot of research on the effect can be found online.
 - 81 Attributed to Nordstrom, an American upscale fashion retailer.
 - 82 Bakke (2010) *Joy at Work*
 - 83 Berg, Dutton, Wrzesniewski (2007) *What is Job Crafting and Why Does It Matter?*
 - 84 Wrzesniewski, Dutton (2001) *Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work*
 - 85 Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) 'Jobs, Careers, and Callings: People's Relations to Their Work'
 - 86 We have a survey on our website that takes 1 minute where you can find out in which category you are in at the moment.
 - 87 Pryce-Jones (2010) *Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success*
 - 88 Wrzesniewski, Dutton (2001) *Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work*
 - 89 Hatfield, Cacioppo, Rapson (1993) *Emotional Contagion*
 - 90 Fowler, Christakis (2009) *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*
 - 91 Sy, Cote, Saavedra (2005) *The Contagious Leader: Impact of the Leader's Mood on the Mood of Group Members, Group Affective Tone, and Group Processes*
 - 92 Kramer, Guillory, Hancock (2013) 'Experimental Evidence of Massive-scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks'
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- 108 Campbell, Lavalley (1993) 'Who am I? The Role of Self-concept Confusion in Understanding the Behavior of People with Low Self-esteem'
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5 SUCCESS STORIES SO FAR

- 1 Passion and persistence for long-term goals. More about grit can be found in the Technique, Set Self-concordant Goals, or by searching online for Angela Duckworth and her TED Talk.
- 2 Tayyab Rashid is a licensed clinical psychologist, researcher at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and writer of the *Positive Psychotherapy Manual*.
- 3 Hanin (2000) *Emotions in Sport*
- 4 VUCA: volatile, uncertain, chaotic, ambiguous. The term was used first at West Point, the training centre for future army officers. It's used to describe a world that is rapidly becoming more complex and less predictable.

6 FUTURE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN ORGANISATIONS

- 1 Search for the Drake equation if you want to calculate the probability of your existence.

- 2 I invite you to search online for the ‘pale blue dot’ picture to get a sense of what our position in space truly looks like.
- 3 Wilson (2014) *The Meaning of Human Existence*
- 4 Some studies suggest that humans also use pheromones, especially when it comes to attracting sexual partners, but the scientific evidence for this is thin.
- 5 *Living Planet Report* (2014)
- 6 See for example: *Defining a New Economic Paradigm: The Report of the High-Level Meeting on Well-being and Happiness*.
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7 FINAL THOUGHTS: A NOTE ON PERSONAL CHANGE

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