Assessing Well-Being: The Seity Model

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Well-being is a perception—one that reflects the extent to which people believe their lives are going well. In simple terms well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good. This perception emerges in the context of the culture and value systems in which people live as well as in the individual's goals, expectations, and standards. Quality of life can be affected by, among other things, physical health, psychological state, and social relationships.

Researchers have worked for years to develop sensitive measures of how people feel about their lives and circumstances. These efforts have yielded reliable and valid tools, but they tend to be time-consuming and assess periods of time ranging from a few weeks to a few months. Sometimes no time frame is given. Identifying the needs of users and delivering appropriate interventions in a timely manner requires a well-being measure that is strength-based, focused on the present, and quick and easy to use. Ideally this type of well-being measure should be appropriate for daily use.

Life Satisfaction Surveys

Life satisfaction surveys ask people to rate their lives holistically, most often without a stated time frame. Users are asked to average or otherwise summate perceptions about life in responding to each item. Life satisfaction measures such as the *Satisfaction With Life Scale* (Diener et al., 1985) have been used to examine population differences and assess the effects of interventions designed to improve lives. However, these surveys are of minimal help to professionals who need a quick and easy read on how a person is doing *today.* Even though the scales are relatively short, life satisfaction measures require cognitive evaluations that take time and concentration and may be vulnerable to biases, such a wanting to impress the evaluator. Last – and most important for many applications – they are not designed to be used on a frequent basis and so are inappropriate for detecting sudden changes in well-being.

One exception may be the Cantril Self Anchoring Scale, also known as Cantril's ladder (Cantril, 1965). Users are encouraged to see their lives through the lens of a ladder, and to assign the top and bottom rungs of the ladder to the best and worst possible lives they can imagine, respectively. Users then indicate their life satisfaction by identifying the rung on which they presently live. The visual nature of this task makes it easy to complete and the approach could be adopted to assess daily changes in well-being, although this has not yet been tested.

Affect Measures

Questionnaires in this category allow people to rate their emotional states directly, typically using a fixed set of positive and negative emotions and a time frame between 1 and 4 weeks.

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Examples include the *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (Watson et al., 1988) and the *Scale of Positive and Negative Experience* (Diener et al., 2010). The response window for affect surveys could be shortened, but they are not designed to capture momentary changes in well-being; they are better suited to providing insight into the user's recent emotional state.

Psychological Well-Being (PWB) Measures

Another trend in well-being assessment takes a positive approach by asking people to match themselves to standards that represent optimal functioning. PWB measures are strength-based, asking people how strongly or how often they have positive perceptions of themselves.

The *Flourishing Scale* (Diener et al., 2010) and the *PERMA-Profiler* (Butler & Kern, 2016) are two such measures that appear frequently in the literature. They present indicators of PWB to which people respond using an agreement scale. These indicators capture the user's self-perceived success in areas such as engagement, relationships, self-esteem, meaning in life, and optimism. The Flourishing Scale is relatively short and easy to complete, but the test-retest reliability is high, suggesting it measures enduring traits and is less suitable for picking up short term changes in well-being. The *PERMA-Profiler* is relatively lengthy, with a complex response scale. It adopts a longer-term approach than is practical for use on a daily basis. Also, the results are difficult to summarize for quick feedback in an applied setting.

The *SWEMWBS* (Tennant et al., 2007), another PWB scale, is frequently used to evaluate mental-health initiatives. A set of questions ask users how often they experience positive perceptions of themselves, including both feeling good ("I've been feeling cheerful") and functioning well ("I've been interested in new things"). Responses are sensitive to change (Shah et al., 2021), making the SWEMWBS suitable for short-term assessment of well-being. Scoring of responses can be complicated, but an option exists to simply add the responses to yield a measure suitable for use in applied settings.

Seity Well-Being Check-In

The *Seity Well-Being Check-In* is a novel PWB measure that promises to fill the gap left by existing approaches. Seity's tool is ideally suited for use in medical, educational, and counseling settings. At the start of each session people access an app or website to answer four questions:

1. How's your energy today?
2. How's your direction today?
3. How's your belonging today?
4. How's your joy today?

Responses to each question are made by selecting one of five smiley-face emojis. This tool enables a practitioner to know immediately who is doing exceptionally well on a given day, and who is troubled, listless, or in crisis. Further, since the measure is designed for daily completion, information is also provided by observing changes in responses from one day to the next.

Preliminary scientific research has established the validity of the Seity Well-Being Check-In. Total scores from the Seity measure have correlations with SWEMWBS scores ranging from .73 to .79 in a sample of college students, and are as high as .88 in a sample of older adults who also have college experience.