Habits, Practices and Rituals

A Framework for Living Well

Canadian Positive Psychology Association
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Jan Stanley, MAPP
jan.b.stanley@gmail.com
Aristotle’s metaphor:
We begin as a tiny acorn. Our purpose is to develop ourselves and our lives to produce our own best grand and beautiful oak tree.
“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, we have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.” - Aristotle
Habits, Practices and Rituals
A Framework for Living Well

• Why a framework?
• What are HPR?
• How do we use HPR for living well?
Why a framework for living well?
What is a habit?
HABIT

A behavior repeated so often as to become automatic.
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A behavior repeated so often as to become automatic.

Wood, Quinn & Kashy 2002

“Repeated routine behavior in the past is the best predictor of behavior in the present.”

Little effort required!
HABIT

A behavior repeated so often as to become automatic.

• Examples
  • Morning meditation
  • Gratitude journal
    • Exercise
  • Call a friend
Using habits strategically

Understand which actions bring greater fulfillment, then create habits to ensure you do them regularly.

Q: Which habits help my oak tree grow strong?
What is a practice?
A PRACTICE

Repeated performance of related activities to acquire or improve skills.
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Repeated performance of related activities to acquire or improve skills.

R. Davidson, 2014

“Well-being can be learned. It’s very analogous to skills training: It is through repeated practice that connections get established in the brain that support the new skill.”

*Living well is a set of skills!*
PRACTICE

Repeated performance of related activities to acquire or improve skills.

PP Examples

• Positive relationships
• Mindfulness
• Gratitude
• Optimism
Using practice strategically

Remaining self-compassionate, ask what skills would bring greater fulfillment, then cultivate them by creating practices.

Q: Which new or better skills would help my oak tree grow strongest?
What is a ritual?
RITUAL

Symbolic actions to anchor experiences.
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Symbolic actions to anchor experiences.

Norton & Gino
Norton, Yang & Vohs

Rituals lead to feelings of control and increased involvement – enhanced experience.

Those who performed rituals felt better, too!
RITUAL

Symbolic actions to anchor experiences.

PP Examples

• Journal and pen
• Meditation shawl
• ACR happy dance
Using ritual strategically

Identify moments that connect you to excellence or purpose and create rituals to anchor your experience.

Q: What deep understanding would help my oak tree grow strongest?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HABITS</strong> of Well Being</th>
<th><strong>PRACTICES</strong> of Well Being</th>
<th><strong>RITUALS</strong> of Well Being</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Repeated performance of related activities</strong></td>
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<td>Automating behaviors</td>
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**HABITS** of Well Being

**Definition**
Automating behaviors

**Goals**
To routinize well-being related behaviors

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**PRACTICES** of Well Being

**Repeated performance of related activities**

To learn and improve skills of well being

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**RITUALS** of Well Being

**Symbolic actions**

To anchor and enhance well being experiences
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<td>Enhanced skills for living well</td>
<td>Integration of experiences with living well</td>
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<td><strong>Outcome</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Added benefits</strong></td>
<td>May have flow, positive emotions, accomplishment. “Learning to learn” carries to other areas.</td>
<td>May expand awareness of meaning in one’s life, connect daily life to life purpose and values, sense-making.</td>
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**Definition**
Automating behaviors

**Goal**
To routinize well-being related behaviors

**Outcome**
Achieve benefits of behaviors repeated regularly

**Added benefits**
Can enhance self-regulation ability, willpower not depleted
HABITS of Well Being

**Definition**
Automating behaviors

**Goal**
To routinize well-being related behaviors

**Outcome**
Achieve benefits of regular well-being behaviors

**Added benefits**
Can enhance self-regulation ability, willpower not depleted

---

PRACTICES of Well Being

**Definition**
Repeated performance of related activities

**Goal**
To learn and improve skills of well being

**Outcome**
Enhanced character and skills for living well

**Added benefits**
May have flow, positive emotions, accomplishment.

“Learning to learn” carries to other areas.

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RITUALS of Well Being

**Definition**
Symbolic actions

**Goal**
To anchor and enhance well-being experiences

**Outcome**
Integration of actions with living well, constancy of purpose

**Added benefits**
May enlarge awareness of meaning in one’s life, connect daily life to life purpose and values, sense-making.

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text
Case Study:

For the past few months, William’s energy has steadily declined. He began the year resolved to experience more joy in his life, not radically so, but enough to feel like he is fully alive and not just a slave to his job, household chores and family obligations. William is an architect, in a satisfying marriage with two school aged children.

Habit:

Practice:

Ritual:
Case Study:

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Habits:  Morning run.

Practice:  Playfulness. Joining softball team and regular pick up games of basketball. Playing with children every day, even briefly. Finding ways to lighten the mood at work each week.

Rituals:  Silly selfie with kids each day after play, using photos to create a family calendar of fun.
Habit, practice or ritual?

Which activity?

Know what brings fulfillment? Make it a **habit**!

Need to improve? Create a **practice**!

Want to connect deeply? Design a **ritual**!
Sources of habit, practice and ritual ideas

Science

Society

Self
The beauty of a framework

Who We Can Be
- Best future self
- Excellence
- Virtue, strengths

What We Can Do
- Life purpose
- Goals & mission
- Career, lifework
Other People Matter

Habits, practices and rituals?

Habits
  *
  *
  *

Practices
  *
  *
  *

Ritual
  *
Well being activities can be habituated
*the way we spend our days*
*the nature of our neurons and genetic expression*

Well being can be learned
*practices strengthens well being “muscles”*

Well being experiences can be anchored and enhanced
*ritual deepens and imprints our experiences*
The consequence of forging life by purpose and resolution is a sense of inner harmony, a dynamic order in the contents of consciousness.

*Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*
Sir Isaac Newton once said that his life had been spent collecting pebbles of insight along the shore of the sea of truth.


