



Ageing Well

Positive Ageing Toolkit - Module 1



Co-funded by
the European Union





AGEING WELL

Ageing Well: Science based habits of people who age well

Project No. : 2023-1-FR01-KA220-ADU-000153350

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Module 1: Introduction to well-being and resilience

Introduction

As the global population ages, understanding how to age well has become increasingly important. This module explores the concepts of well-being and resilience in the context of ageing. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how individuals can maintain their well-being and adapt to the challenges of ageing.



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Objectives:

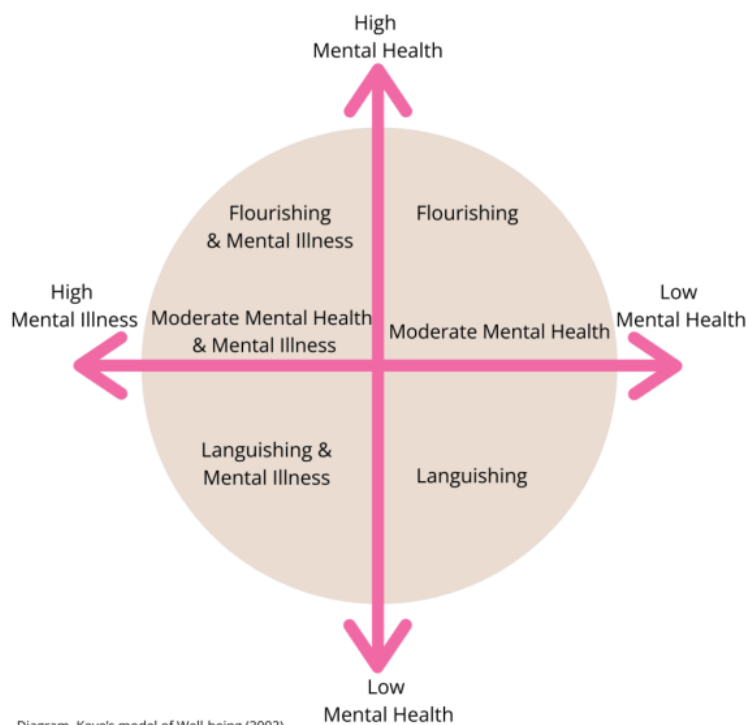
- Examine the factors that contribute to a fulfilling, healthy, and resilient later life.
- Promote well-being: Learn strategies to enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being in older adults.
- Build resilience: Identify and develop resilience factors that help individuals cope with the challenges associated with ageing.
- Practice well-being and resilience: Share the tools necessary to support positive ageing experiences and foster resilience among older populations.

Section 1: Definitions of well-being and resilience

Health is currently identified with the concept of well-being, as it is defined to be a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or disability. In a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, an individual can fulfil his/her potential and personal resources, can cope with the usual stressors of life, she/he is productive and creative, and contributes to the wider community (WHO, 2013).

Well-being

Well-being is a positive condition experienced by individuals and societies. Like health, it is a key component of everyday life, and it is defined by social, economic and environmental conditions. The well-being of a society can be observed by the extent to which it is resilient, develops capacity to act and is prepared to overcome challenges (WHO, 2021). At the individual level, the term refers to the pursuit of unfolding one's potential (Galiana et al., 2020). According to Keyes' model, well-being is defined as the combination of a) **positive feelings about life** (emotional well-being) and b) **good functioning in life** (psychological and social functioning). Three levels of well-being are distinguished: a. **languishing**, b. **moderate well-being**, and c. **flourishing**. High levels of well-being correspond to the commonly accepted term of 'flourishing' (Keyes, 2002).



There are two kinds of well-being: objective and subjective (Voukelatou et al., 2021):

- **Objective well-being** refers to living conditions and quality of life factors such as income, health and education. In these terms, well-being is beyond the individual and includes the ability of societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose, including quality of life.
- **Subjective well-being** includes an individual's perception of different aspects of their life, experiences and emotions, as well as attitudes and opinions towards life (Giapraki et al., 2020; WHO, 2022). In other words, subjective well-being refers to individuals' self-assessment of their life including life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional experiences. Similarly, in the PERMA-Profilier model, proposed by Seligman and colleagues (2011), well-being is defined by high levels of five factors: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning in life, and accomplishment.

Resilience

Resilience involves an individual's ability to adapt to changes or challenges in life, and recover from adverse circumstances (Merchant et al., 2022; Musich et al., 2022).

More specifically, resilience is defined as the maintenance, or rapid recovery, during or after periods of stress, which may have occurred after a potentially traumatic event, difficult living conditions, a critical period of transition, or illness (Thomas et al., 2019). Resilient individuals have problem-solving skills, social competence and sense of purpose, and they generally have productive lives (WHO, 2021).

The capacity for resilience is directly related to successful ageing as well as to improved quality of life (Thomas et al., 2019). Older people are very likely to experience adversity in some form during the ageing process, whether it is a decline in physical or cognitive abilities, the loss of a loved one, or a decrease in social networks. Thus, when faced with age-related difficulties, their ability to demonstrate resilience becomes more and more important, not only for themselves but even for their caregivers (Nair et al., 2024). Resilience is considered simultaneously as an individual characteristic, a process, and an outcome (Aldwin & Igarashi, 2015). Enhancing resilience can be achieved by all people,

despite disease and age, through active ageing which contributes to overall wellbeing (Ryff et al., 2021).

Key components: physical, emotional, social and psychological well-being

Well-being is a broad and multidimensional concept. The first attempts to measure well-being were related to the concept of 'hedonic', or 'subjective', or 'emotional' well-being, all referring to the same component. Emotional well-being includes:

- life satisfaction
- positive affect, and
- overall sense of happiness experienced by an individual

Ryff (1989) expanded the definition of well-being to a more 'eudemonic' dimension that is 'psychological' well-being including six components as follows:

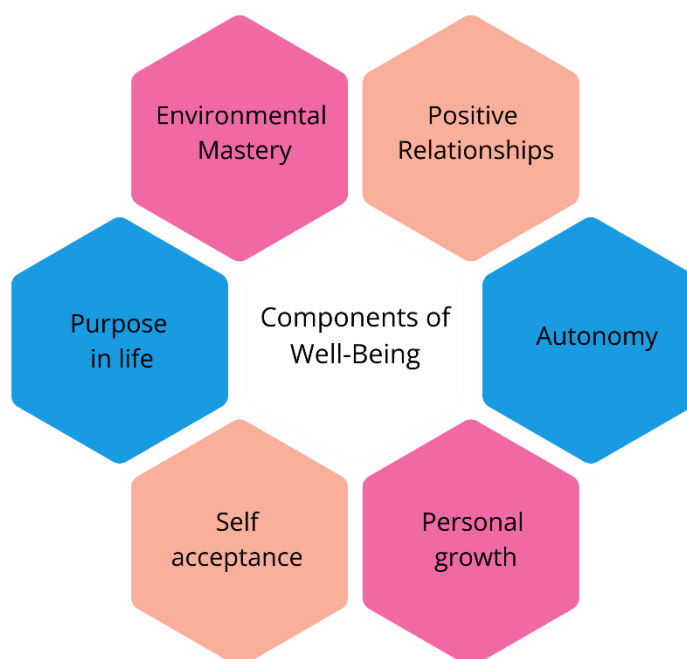


Diagram 2. Ryff's expanded definition of psychological well-being (1989)

Keyes (2002) added the component of social well-being to incorporate five optimal social functioning indicators, including social contribution (e.g., volunteering for a good purpose), social integration (e.g. having a sense of belonging to a group), social actualization (e.g., to have a sense that society is a good place to live), social acceptance (e.g., to have a sense that people are trustworthy), and social coherence (e.g., how society works is meaningful).

Many factors contribute to the well-being of older people, as follows:

- Physical: Physical factors, such as genetic inheritance, physical activity and health, as well as proper nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases are linked with the well-being of older people.
- Psychological: The mindset of older people, their optimism, self-confidence, and adaptability to new situations can make a positive contribution. The ability to adapt to changes, the belief that one can face challenges, and the recognition of oneself as important and valued contribute to their resilience and wellbeing.
- Social: Friends, family relationships, participation in support groups, and community activities contribute to the resilience and well-being of older people. Also, environmental factors, such as the environment in which older people live, and whether they have access to health infrastructure, cultural centres, parks, and other recreational areas contribute to the well-being of older people (Abud et al., 2022).

Section 2: Importance of well-being and resilience in ageing

Empirical studies have shown significant interactions between active ageing, well-being and resilience, as follows:

Health and Longevity

- Feeling happy and satisfied with life is linked to better health and longer life (Diener et al., 2018; Pocock et al., 2022).

Positive Emotions in Older Age

- Older people focus more on positive feelings, known as the positivity phenomenon (Ryff et al., 2021).
- Eudemonic well-being (sense of purpose) and resilience help reduce age-related diseases (Kim et al., 2021).

Flourishing

- Flourishing, or having full mental health, protects against diseases, suicidal thoughts, and frequent use of health services (Keyes & Simoes, 2012; Keyes et al., 2012; Keyes & Grzywacz, 2005).
- Flourishing also lowers the risk of depression and other mental health issues in the future (Keyes, Dhingra, & Simoes, 2010).
- More flourishing leads to fewer mental health problems in older adults.

Active Ageing and Life Satisfaction

- Engaging in meaningful activities and participating in social events significantly enhances life satisfaction (Mayordomo et al., 2021).
- Regular involvement in social and recreational activities improves well-being (Foster et al., 2021).
- Having a strong peer support network is a major factor in life satisfaction (Yotsidi et al., 2023).

Resilience and Life Satisfaction

- Resilience is closely linked to life satisfaction in older people (Lopez et al., 2020).
- Higher resilience is associated with higher scores on active ageing (Siltanen et al., 2020).
- Resilience protects against stress and promotes a positive outlook, improving quality of life (Liu et al., 2023).
- Older people with high resilience report better health and greater optimism (Bartholomaeus et al., 2019).

- Resilience and well-being support active ageing, as older people work on activities that enhance their abilities (Rantanen et al., 2019).
- Resilient older adults are more likely to stay engaged and maintain well-being despite age-related challenges.

Resilience and Health

- Resilience helps limit the negative effects of declining health and social losses, maintaining well-being (Stern et al., 2023).
- High resilience is linked to better mental health, energy, pain management, physical outcomes, and recovery (Merchant et al., 2022; Zábó et al., 2023; WHO, 2021).
- A Finnish study found resilience helped 75-year-olds with early walking difficulties but not 85-year-olds with severe mobility issues (Siltanen et al., 2020).

Active ageing is associated with greater life satisfaction among older adults in European countries (Mayordomo et al., 2021). Resilience and well-being promote active ageing, as older adults striving for their well-being are more likely to seize opportunities for active engagement and maintain high levels of well-being despite facing age-related challenges.

Self-Reflection Activities

1. Well-being assessment

According to Keyes' model, well-being comprises a) positive feelings about life (emotional well-being) and b) good functioning in life (psychological and social functioning). Please rate yourself on these dimensions, on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 10 means “completely agree”.

Emotional well-being	Rate 1 - 10
Overall, I am satisfied with my life.	
I feel happy most of the time.	
I experience positive emotions regularly.	
Emotional well-being sum	
Emotional well-being mean (sum/ 3)	
Psychological well-being	
Self-acceptance: I have a positive attitude toward myself, and I accept both my good and bad qualities.	
Positive relations: I have warm, trusting and intimate relationships with others.	
Autonomy: I am independent, and I can guide and evaluate my behavior based on internalized standards and values.	
Environmental mastery: I am competent in managing my environment, and I can choose or create contexts suitable to my needs.	
Purpose in life: I have a sense of meaning and purpose in my life.	
Personal growth: I feel that I am continuing to grow and I am open to new experiences.	
Psychological well-being sum	
Psychological well-being mean (sum/ 6)	
Social well-being	
Social integration: I feel that I belong in my community and society.	
Social contribution: I feel that I am a vital member of society and I have something of value to give to the world.	
Social coherence: I experience my social world as sensible, predictable and coherent.	
Social acceptance: I trust others and I believe that they are capable of kindness.	



Social actualization: I believe that society is a good place to live.	
Social well-being sum	
Social well-being mean (sum/5)	

1. For each well-being aspect draw a line that represents the mean to the respective column in the diagram below so that you can visualize these aspects in your life:



2. Reflect on your well-being assessment. What do you notice? Which aspects need to be strengthened? What are some simple steps that you can take to strengthen them?

The aspects that need to be strengthened are:

Some simple steps that I can take to strengthen them are:



What have you learned about yourself and what are you willing to do in your life to enhance your well-being?

2. Resilience assessment

1. What is resilience for you?

2. What are the challenges that you have already overcome?

3. What are the resources (mindsets, people, emotions, tools, strategies) that have helped you overcome these challenges?

4. What have you learned from your resilience assessment? How can you use your resources for the new challenges that you face in your life?

 **Quiz**

1. Which one of the following describes well-being fully:

- A. Good functioning in life
- B. Flourishing
- C. Positive feelings about life

2. Psychological well-being is also defined as:

- A. Emotional well-being
- B. Eudemonic well-being
- C. Subjective well-being

3. Resilience has been found to alleviate all the following except from:

- A. Pain
- B. Mobility problems
- C. Neuromuscular impairments

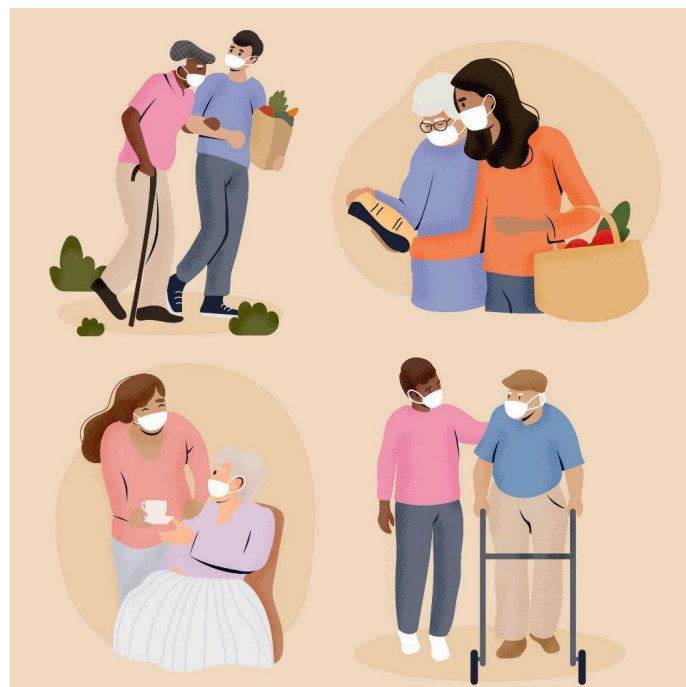
*Correct answers: 1-B, 2-B, 3-C

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Consortium



e-Seniors

Promoting digital literacy and social inclusion for seniors, e-Seniors focuses on integrating older adults into the digital age, reducing social isolation, and enhancing their quality of life.



The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)

The voice for non-formal adult education in Europe, advocating for lifelong learning opportunities and supporting initiatives that foster active citizenship and personal development among adults.



Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)

A leading research and development organization in Cyprus, specialising in educational technology, innovation, and capacity building. They are committed to fostering effective learning environments and supporting digital skills development



Elliniki Etaireia thetikis Psychologias – The Hellenic Association of Positive Psychology (HAPPSY)

Dedicated to advancing the principles of positive psychology in Greece, promoting mental well-being, resilience, and positive aging through research, education, and community engagement.



Instituto para el Fomento del Desarrollo y la Formación si (Infodef)

A Spanish organization focused on developing and implementing innovative educational and training programmes. Their work emphasises social inclusion, entrepreneurship, and the empowerment of vulnerable groups.



Neophytos ch Charalambous – Institute of Development Ltd (IoD Ltd)

Based in Cyprus, IoD is committed to promoting sustainable development through education, research, and social innovation. Their projects aim to empower individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.



SEMwell a Motion Digital s.r.o. (SEMwell)

Specialises in creating digital solutions and interactive tools to enhance education and well-being. They focus on leveraging technology to support lifelong learning and positive ageing.



Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung – Swiss Association for Continuing Education (SVEB)

The national umbrella organization for adult education in Switzerland, promoting the importance of continuing education and advocating for high-quality learning opportunities for adults at all stages of life.

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