

# DISCOVERING THE RECIPE FOR THRIVING

EPIISODE ONE

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THE WELLBEING LAB PODCAST SERIES FOR XERO

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**THEWELLBEINGLAB**

A MICHELLEMCQUAID PROGRAM

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?







- Studies have found that when we're thriving at work, we experience an energized sense of growth and momentum around the things that matter most to us. We literally feel more alive, more confident, more capable, more connected to others, and more satisfied with our jobs because it feels like we are doing the best work of our lives.
- People who are thriving at work have been found to generate more creative ideas, be more innovative and proactive in their work practices, and able to persist amid daily challenges without burning out. They also exhibit better health, are rated as high performers by their bosses, and take the initiative to develop the careers they want.
- This doesn't mean that people who are thriving don't still encounter challenges, struggle sometimes, or that they no longer feel the sting of disappointments, setbacks or failures. It does mean they have the knowledge, the tools, and the support to be able to learn from these moments in ways that are good for them and good for others.
- Researchers suggest that wellbeing is our ability to feel good and function effectively so that we can consistently thrive. Studies have found that just like our body weight – which has a genetically determined set-point range that for most of us is naturally stable and relatively positive – the same is true of our wellbeing. So just as eating well and exercising regularly may help you to maintain or even improve your optimal body weight when you consistently engage in practices that support your wellbeing you are more likely to feel like you're thriving.
- One of the most popular theories in recent years to understand, measure and improve our wellbeing is that proposed by Professor Martin Seligman who suggests that we need to find the right balance for each of us of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment and health. And he uses the acronym PERMAH as an easy way to put these wellbeing ingredients together.
- How much you'll need of each PERMAH ingredient is going to vary depending on the type of person you are, the situations you're in, and the outcomes you want. There's not one right number to aim for, there's only the right score for you, right now as you work towards realizing your potential, which is why your goal should be to experiment with the PERMAH ingredients so you can continue creating your own recipes for thriving. As you experiment try to remember that your wellbeing is not a steady state. It should ebb and flow, and dip and rise, based on what is happening in the world around you.

- It's also not enough to simply improve your own wellbeing when it comes to being able to thrive at work; you have to help create an environment where others can thrive as well. For example, despite our best intentions, studies have found that a lot of our time working together gets lost in what Professor Gervase Bushe describes as “interpersonal mush” – the largely unfavorable conclusions we tend to leap to about what others are thinking, feeling and doing – which leads to distrust among team members, spotty implementation, an inability to learn together, and results in higher levels of anxiety and burn out.
- Given the large presence of interpersonal mush in most workplaces and the toll it takes on our wellbeing, it's not surprising that an extensive two-year study at Google found that their highest performing teams all had one thing in common – high levels of psychological safety. Professor Amy Edmondson at Harvard Business School explains that psychological safety exists when team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable with each other by speaking up and offering new ideas, asking questions, valuing different opinions, and being willing and able to learn from their mistakes.
- The biggest obstacle to improving our wellbeing and levels of psychological safety at work for many of us is the old “I'm too busy” trap. We recommend banning “I'm too busy” from your vocabulary as it really just hides the reasons you're choosing not to prioritize these actions right now (i.e., “I don't know how,” “I can't do it,” and “I don't want to do it.”) and instead get honest with yourself about what's happening. Remember that it's better to spend two minutes improving your wellbeing than no minutes, so “I'm too busy” is never really the problem.
- Improving your wellbeing is an ongoing journey so try to adopt a kindness mindset for yourself as you experiment and play with ways of prioritizing your wellbeing and your team's psychological safety. Be your own wise and kind inner coach by being encouraging rather than critical when you slip, being curious rather than judgemental if you fall short, and gently but firmly holding yourself accountable for showing up and making your ability to thrive a priority.

## YOUR INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE

### 1. STEP ON THE PERMAH SCALE

Think about your experiences and feelings at work over the last month and rate yourself on a scale of 0 being never and 10 being all the time against each of the following statements.

WELLBEING PILLAR		MY SCORE
 POSITIVE EMOTION	I felt positive at work.	
 ENGAGEMENT	I was interested and deeply engaged in my work.	
 RELATIONSHIPS	I felt respected and appreciated by my co-workers.	
 MEANING	I felt that the work I did was valuable and worthwhile.	
 ACCOMPLISHMENT	I made progress towards reaching my work-related goals.	
 HEALTH	Physically, I felt strong and healthy.	

### 2. APPLY YOUR PERMAH 3 POINT CHECK

Looking at your scores, answer the following questions:




- ☐ **How** do you feel about your results (the comfortable and the uncomfortable scores)?
- ☐ **Why** are you feeling this way?
- ☐ **Who** do you want to be as you step forward with this new insight? What wellbeing action do you want to prioritize to help you thrive at work?

## YOUR TEAM CHALLENGE

### 1. STEP ON THE PERMAH SCALE

Wellbeing – or the lack of it – can be highly contagious in teams, so have your team also step on the PERMAH Team Scale below to see how you're doing when it comes to supporting each other's needs for psychological safety.

Think about your experiences and feelings at work over the last month and rate your team on a scale of 0 being never and 10 being all the time against each of the following statements.

WELLBEING PILLAR		TEAM SCORE
 POSITIVE EMOTION	We willingly and quickly talked about problems and tough issues with each other, even if it felt uncomfortable.	
 ENGAGEMENT	We found ways to utilize each other's strengths as we worked together.	
 RELATIONSHIPS	We regularly asked each other for help.	
 MEANING	We encouraged each other to take smart risks that could make a positive difference to others.	
 ACCOMPLISHMENT	When people made mistakes, we didn't hold it against them.	
 HEALTH	We supported each other to work in ways that were good for our health.	

### 2. APPLY YOUR PERMAH 3 POINT CHECK

Looking at your scores answer the following questions:

- ☐ **How** do we feel about our results (the comfortable and the uncomfortable scores)?
- ☐ **Why** are we feeling this way?
- ☐ **Who** do we want to be as we step forward together with this new insight? What wellbeing action do we want to prioritize to improve our psychological safety as a team?

# WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- **Watch this interview** with Professor Martin Seligman as he explains the PERMAH theory of wellbeing.
- **Listen to this podcast** with Professor Martin Seligman as he explains what researchers are discovering about improving your wellbeing.
- **Listen to this podcast** with Professor Amy Edmondson as she explains what researchers are discovering about improving psychological safety. Be sure to **grab the cheat sheet** as well.
- **Listen to this podcast** with Dr. Peggy Kern as she explains how to be an intelligent and active steward of your own wellbeing. Be sure to **grab the cheat sheet** as well.