

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, all smiling broadly and looking towards the camera. The image is the background for the entire page.

Survey of products and services which promote wellbeing

Shift

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Introduction

Wellbeing is defined by the World Health Organisation as "a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community... Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Wellbeing relates both to an individuals' subjective wellbeing (their positive emotions and sense of satisfaction with their lives) and also to their psychological wellbeing (which includes self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth).

Public health experts increasingly view developing and protecting wellbeing as a key approach to preventing mental health problems. A growing body of research has shown that wellbeing protects against the development of mental illness and also that it is possible to take action to develop better wellbeing. There is now a range of tested interventions and techniques that help young people to behave in ways that improve wellbeing. There is also a rapidly developing group of products or services designed to facilitate positive mental health habits and activities, either explicitly or implicitly. This document presents evidence that interventions based on some of these actions (mindfulness, gratitude, awe and optimism) can promote wellbeing, accompanied by examples of products and services which facilitate these positive mental health habits or activities. This is followed by a longer list of products and service that aim to promote mental wellbeing, but do not necessarily fit into the categories above.

Mindfulness

Definition:

Mindfulness is an integrative, mind-body based approach that helps people change the way they think and feel about their experiences, especially stressful experiences. It involves paying attention to our thoughts and feelings so we become more aware of them, less enmeshed in them, and better able to manage them. [1]

Review One: The effect of mindfulness-based therapy on anxiety and depression: A meta-analytic review [2]

Summary: A review of 39 empirical studies which looked at the effect of mindfulness-based therapies on anxiety and depression found that mindfulness-based therapies were effective that for treating anxiety and mood problems in individuals with clinically diagnosed symptoms.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to estimate the size of the effect of mindfulness-based therapies on anxiety and mood.

Method: The review identified 39 studies, with a total of 1,140 participants who had range of conditions, including cancer, generalized anxiety disorder, depression, and other psychiatric or medical conditions. In each of the studies, participants received mindfulness-based therapy. The review examined the effect of mindfulness-based therapy on depression and anxiety.

Outcome: The comparison of pre- and post-treatment conditions across all the studies showed that mindfulness-based therapy was moderately effective for improving anxiety and mood symptoms. The size of the effect was maintained over time, and not related to the number of treatment sessions.

Review Two: Mindfulness-based therapy: A comprehensive meta-analysis [3]

Summary: The researchers looked at all of the studies on the effect of mindfulness-based therapy published up to 2013, and conducted a comprehensive effect-size analysis. They found that mindfulness-based therapies were effective, particularly for reducing anxiety, depression and stress.

Detail:

Aim: The study was an attempt to evaluate the efficacy of mindfulness-based therapies for treating a variety of psychological problems.

Method: The authors conducted a systematic review of studies published in journals or in dissertations in two major medical and psychological research databases from the first available date until May 10, 2013. They found 209 studies that met the inclusion criteria, with a total of 12,145 participants.

Outcome: The study found that mindfulness-based therapies had a significant effect of a moderate size, comparing pre- and post-treatment conditions. It was also effective compared to wait-listed controls, compared to other active treatments (placebo), and other psychological treatments. The effect size was not significantly different to the effect of cognitive behavioural therapy, or medication.

Other: Mindfulness Report [1]

Summary: This report by the Mental Health Foundation provides a useful overview of the different types of mindfulness-based interventions, the evidence for their effectiveness and the impact of mindfulness on health and wellbeing.

The Benefits of Being Present

Summary: According to the authors of this paper, "Mindfulness is an attribute of consciousness long believed to promote well-being. This research provides a theoretical and empirical examination of the role of mindfulness in psychological well-being." [4]

[Read Full Paper](#)

Mindfulness: Product and service examples

Headspace

- ▶ **Price:** Free for the first 10 downloads, and from £3.74 per month after this. | **Scale:** Specific app downloads unknown, 29,500 facebook likes, over 14,000 twitter followers |

Summary: Headspace is an online tool which delivers daily bite-size guided mindfulness sessions via the Headspace website or app. The focus of the site is to make meditation accessible to all, introducing meditation and its benefits to those who would not usually consider it. Sign-up is simple, and the user then gets ten free introductory sessions. The website is clear, inviting and very visual. It includes scientifically evidenced explanations of the benefits of meditation, blogs on the topic and a community board for discussions.



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Wild Divine

- ▶ **Price:** From £299 | **Scale:** Over 100,000 users of Wild Divine programs |

Summary: Video games are not usually associated with meditation, however the developers of the Wild Divine game were one of the first people to explore this link. The Wild Divine video game comes with equipment that measures the player's skin conductance and heart rate variability. The physiological information from the player then affects what is happening on screen. For example, a player can lower a feather onto a pillow by relaxing, which in turn lowers their heart rate and skin conductance. Through on-screen coaching, including breathing, meditation and relaxation exercises, the player learns to become more effective at reduce stress and relaxing. The relaxation techniques learned in the game can then be used in real life situations. The game is explicitly about improving wellbeing.



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Meditation courses

- ▶ **Price:** Varies | **Scale:** Numerous dedicated meditation centres in the UK, with meditation courses run in other centres and workplaces. |

Summary: There are a huge variety of meditation courses available. Some are run in dedicated meditation centres, such as the residential courses in Gaia House ranging from 2 to 9 days. Some are regular weekly sessions run by private teachers all over the UK focusing on different elements from introducing meditation to specific stress reduction meditation. Others courses are less formal "drop in" sessions where you can go to meditate with others for a set period of time.

Meditation courses are also available through the NHS for various mental and physical ailments, with over 30% of GPs referring patients with depression to Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) courses which are based around meditation.¹ For example, the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust currently offers an MBCT course of to patients with moderate depression which consists of a two-hour group session, each week for eight weeks.



Gratitude

Definition:

According to Wood, Froh and Geraghty (2010), gratitude is “a general habit of noticing and being appreciative of whatever is good in one’s life” [5]

Test One: Weekly Gratitudes v Hassles Intervention [6]

Summary: People who listed five things they felt grateful for in the past week, once a week for 10 weeks, felt more grateful, more optimistic, exercised more and reported less symptoms of physical illness than people who listed neutral or hassle based events.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to test the effects of a grateful outlook on psychological wellbeing, in compassion with an outlook based on neutral events or hassles.

Method: The researchers randomly divided a sample of 192 undergraduate participants into three groups. Each group received a pack of 10 weekly reports which either asked them to document five gratitudes, five hassles or five neutral events that had occurred over the past day or the past week. Each included instructions. Participants were also asked to rate mood, physical symptoms, reactions to social support received, estimated amount of time spent exercising, and two global life appraisal questions.

NOTE: It is interesting to note that the hassles condition was the only one which included a qualification of what a hassle meant, and also the only condition which asked participants to recall events from the past day and not the past week. It’s not clear why this is the case or whether this had any impact on results.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the neutral and hassles conditions, people who documented weekly gratitudes reported

- feeling more grateful about their lives as a whole
- feeling more optimistic about the upcoming week
- spending nearly 1.5 hr more exercising per week
- fewer symptoms of physical illness
- no change in positive or negative affect

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected during each week of the 10 week intervention. No follow up measurements are given

Test Two: Daily Gratitudes v Hassles Intervention [6]

Summary: People who listed things they felt grateful for every day for 13 days reported feeling more grateful, being more likely to offer emotional support and higher levels of positive affect than people who listed hassles or social comparisons.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to test the affect that increasing the intensity of the gratitude intervention had on psychological wellbeing.

Method: The researchers randomly divided a sample of 157 undergraduates into three groups. Each group received a pack of 16 daily experience rating forms (of which 13 were analysed) that either asked them to document gratitudes or hassles that had occurred over the past day, or ways that they were better off than others. Each included instructions. Participants were also asked detailed health information (incl. minutes and intensity of exercise, alcohol consumption, pain relief used etc) and “if they had helped someone with a problem or offered someone emotional support” in the past day.

NOTE: Instructions provided for the hassles and gratitude conditions were the same as those used in Test One. It’s unclear how many items participants were asked to document in each condition.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the hassles and social comparison conditions, people who documented daily gratitudes reported

- feeling more grateful* over the 13 days
- higher levels of positive affect during the intervention
- no change in physical health and exercise
- being more likely to offer emotional support to others
- being slightly more likely to help someone with a problem

* as indexed by scores against the adjectives grateful, thankful, and appreciative

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected over the 16 days. No follow up measurements are given

Test Three: 4 Week Longitudinal Gratitude Intervention [7]

Summary: People who were taught a mental gratitude exercise received an immediate increase in positive affect but this wasn’t as large as the affect of the best possible self (BPS) intervention. This may be due to the fact that they were less motivated to continue the intervention than those in the BPS condition.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed identify motivational predictors of expressing gratitude and the impact it has on positive affect.

Method: The researchers divided a sample of 67 American psychology students into three groups (gratitude, best possible self or life details). Each group attended a small group session where the examiner explained to them the purpose of the session, the benefit of the intervention and a request for participants to “continue thinking in this way over the next few weeks”. The participants then completed a initial mood questionnaire, mental exercise and a second mood questionnaire. They also rated their motivation to continue with the mental exercise in the future. Two weeks and four weeks after this intervention, participants further online mood and motivation surveys online.

NOTE: Life details was the control condition in this test. Also interesting to note that the gender participants wasn’t neutral with 17 men and 50 women.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the best possible self (BPS) and control conditions, people in the gratitudes condition reported

- feeling lower levels of positive affect than those in BPS
- feeling higher levels of positive affect than control
- lower level of interest in continuing activity than BPS

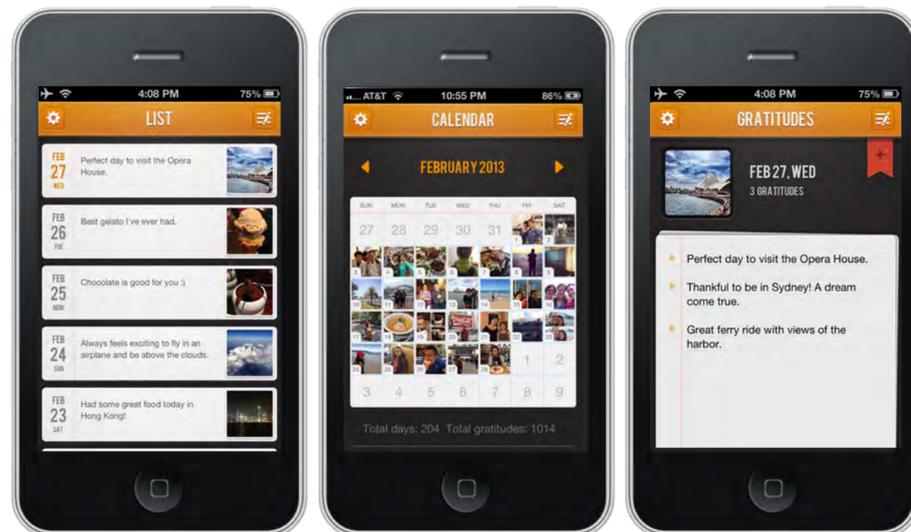
NOTE: Authors found that Self Concordant Motivation predicted continuation of exercise which predicted increases in positive affect. Authors suggests that in this way benefits from positive emotional state require ‘persistent effort’ and further that it is important that it is important to match

Gratitude: Product and service examples

Gratitude Journal

- ▶ **Price:** \$1.99 | **Scale:** 137 monthly online users. Specific app downloads unknown |

Summary: Based on scientific evidence that practising and dwelling on feelings of gratitude every day has a positive impact on subjective wellbeing, the Gratitude Journal 365 is a native iPhone app which helps people to keep a daily journal of things that they are thankful for along with a photo which represents their day for one year. This is presented back in various formats for reflection. According to the app creators, "gratitude can become a positive habit, but only with discipline. With continued exercise, practicing gratitude will create more abundance, prosperity, wellbeing, and happiness than you ever thought possible".



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Daily Greatness Journal

- ▶ **Price:** £34.95 | **Scale:** 61 monthly online users, over 3050 twitter followers,

Summary: The daily greatness journal "A Practical Guide for Consciously Creating Your Days" falls somewhere between a measurement and an intervention as it is designed to help people to encourage positive reflection, mindful life planning and focus. According to the creators, "the daily pages will guide you to form great habits through the 8 daily steps of meditation & visualisation, intentions, dream journalling, gratitude, evening self-awareness questions, exercise, inspired actions & inspiration. The weekly and quarterly check-ins keep you committed, accountable & motivated. With a yearly review that celebrates your achievements and highlights new opportunities for the coming year."



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Mappiness

- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Approx. 20,000 users and over 1m interactions |

Summary: Mappiness is an app born out of a research project at LSE which is designed to discover how people's happiness is affected by their local environment including air pollution, noise, green spaces etc. The app beeps at least once per day and asks the participant to rate how they are feeling along with factors such as who they are with, what they are doing and how much sleep they got etc. The app also collects information on noise levels, location and the amount of daylight. As a consequence of this, the app also provided individuals with a daily log of their moods. The researchers have also published an academic paper which found a link between subjective wellbeing and natural environments. Click here to read >



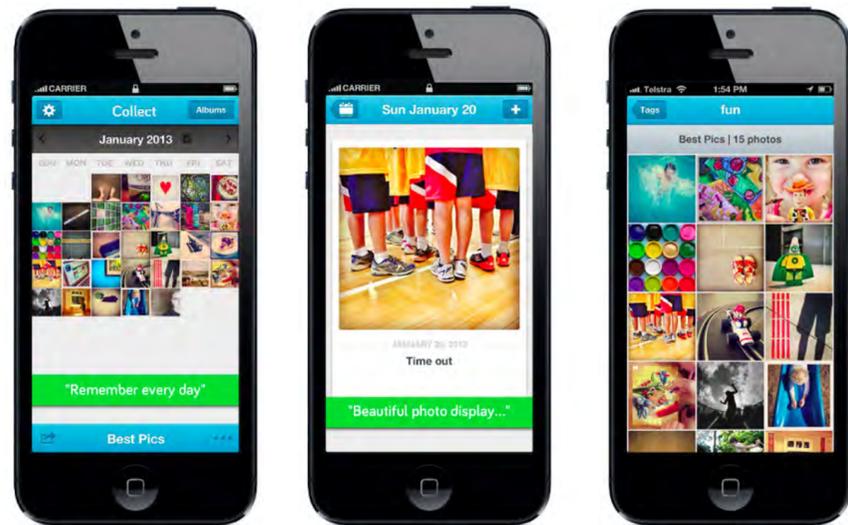
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Gratitude: Product and service examples

Collect

- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 274 monthly online users. Specific app downloads unknown |

Summary: According to it's creators "Collect is an app for iPhone & iPod that helps people create a rich record of their lives by storing one or more photos every day in a monthly calendar...It was purpose-built for photo-a-day & Project 365 enthusiasts". This leverages the ubiquitous nature of the camera phone to create a solution which uses consumer culture to create a behavioural change.



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How Are You Feeling?

- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 10,000 - 50,000 installs

Summary: This is an Android app which asks users "How Are You Feeling?" at time configurable intervals. This question comes up on the users home screen so that they can respond to the question without having to open the app. They can also include information about what exactly they are feeling and why. The app then provides a quantified self log of moods over time.



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World Gratitude Map

- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Approx. 20,000 users and over 1m interactions |

Summary: According to Scientific America, Gratitude Map is a new online map that "invites users to accentuate the positive... encouraging them to document and celebrate the good things in life, a practice that some research suggests may bolster immune system function and increase feelings of wellbeing"

Powered by the amazing Ushahidi platform, users pin a red dot to the map to mark the spot where they felt gratitude. They then write a description of the spot and the reason for their gratitude and this is attached to the red dot on the map.



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Gratitude: Product and service examples + other things to read

Happy Tapper Gratitude Journal

► **Price:** \$0.99 | **Scale:** The #1 gratitude journal app for over five years (exact figures unknown)

Summary: This password protected iPhone app helps people to document and keep a log of their daily gratitudes, using photography and text. According to its website it has been the #1 gratitude journal app for over five years. It also provides “Inspirational quotes for you after writing a new journal entry”.

It has received mix reviews in the App Store.



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7 Tips to Cultivate Gratitude

Article Taster: Feeling grateful makes people feel good: That's not just intuition, it's science. Research also shows it's possible to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. One of the creators of the World Gratitude Map, Jacqueline Lewis, shares some tips on how to feel more grateful, and happier, in your New Year.

[Read Full Article](#)

Tips for Keeping a Gratitude Journal

Article Taster: Over the past decade, they've not only identified the great social, psychological, and physical health benefits that come from giving thanks; they've zeroed in on some concrete practices that help us reap those benefits.

[Read Full Article](#)

Why Living A Life of Gratitude Can Make You Happy

Article Taster: Many days, I try to humble myself and hold a 2-minute gratitude session. I simply sit or kneel, with no distractions, close my eyes, and think about what I'm grateful for and who I'm grateful for. I don't do it every day, but let me tell you, on the days I do it, it makes me very happy.

[Read Full Article](#)

11 Tips For a Powerful Gratitude Journal

Article Taster: There is joy everywhere but that can be overshadowed by pain if you allow it. Take the time to recognise the good and it will transform your life.

[Read Full Article](#)

Awe

Definition:

According to Rudd, Vohs and Aaker (2012), awe is a powerful emotional response consisting of two distinct defining features: **perceptual vastness** (i.e. the feeling that you have “come upon something immense in size, number scope, complexity, ability or social bearing”) and **accommodation** (i.e. the feeling that you need to expand upon existing mental models and adjust your understanding of the world). [8]

Test One: Awe and Time Perception Intervention [8]

Summary: People who experienced feelings of awe perceived time as more plentiful and expansive than people who experienced feelings of happiness. This was even true when people were primed to believe that time was restricted.

Detail:

Aim: Perception of time poverty are negatively correlated with prosocial behaviours, good lifestyle choices (i.e. diet and exercise), health, wellbeing and life satisfaction. The researchers aimed to “test the hypothesis that feeling awe can expand people’s perception of time”.

Method: After priming half of the participants to view time as constricted (using a phrase unscrambling task that either used words relating to limited time or were time neutral) the researchers randomly assigned a sample of 63 students to either a 60 second awe-eliciting or happiness-eliciting commercial. They then answered a final survey related to affective state and perceptions of time.

NOTE: The Awe Commercial “depicted people in city streets and parks encountering and interacting with vast, mentally overwhelming, and seemingly realistic images, such as waterfalls, whales, and astronauts in space”. The Happiness Commercial “depicted people in city streets and parks encountering and interacting with rainbow confetti falling through the air and a parade of smiling, joyful people who were waving flags while wearing brightly coloured outfits and face paint”

Outcome: In comparison with participants who were shown the the happiness-eliciting commercial, people who were shown the awe-eliciting commercial reported:

- feeling that time was more expansive and plentiful

These outcomes have been related to wellbeing (Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Roxburgh, 2004). Read a related article here >

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected immediately after the intervention and no follow up measurements are given.

Test Two: Awe and Impatience Intervention [8]

Summary: People who experienced feelings of awe felt less impatient than than people who experienced feelings of happiness. Further, people who experienced awe were more likely to display willingness to donate time but not money.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to “provide further evidence of this time-expansion effect” (as indexed by impatience) and “whether awe can alter prosocial decisions that exact a temporal cost”.

Method: The researchers randomly assigned a sample of 86 students to either an awe or happiness condition and asked them to “write a narrative about a personal experience during which they felt either awe or happiness, depending on the condition to which they were assigned”. In each condition they received a relevant qualifying statement which explained what was meant by happiness and awe. They then answered a final survey related to affective state, feelings of patience, willingness to volunteer time and willingness to volunteer money.

NOTE: Participants in the awe condition read that awe was “a response to things perceived as vast and overwhelming that alters the way you understand the world” and participants in the happiness condition read that happiness was a feeling of contentment or joy.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the happiness condition, participants in the awe condition reported:

- feeling less impatient
- more willingness to volunteer time
- no change in their willingness to donate money

These outcomes have been related to wellbeing (Robinson & Godbey, 1997; Roxburgh, 2004)

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected immediately after the intervention and no follow up measurements are given.

Test Three: Awe, Materialism and Life Satisfaction [8]

Summary: People who experienced feelings of awe were more likely to prefer experiences to material goods than people who were experiencing neutral feelings. Further, people who experienced awe reported higher levels of life satisfaction than people in neutral emotional states.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to test the hypothesis that feelings of awe might increase measures of life-satisfaction “and also examined the prediction that awe, by influencing perceived time availability, would alter decision making”.

Method: The researchers randomly assigned a panel of 105 participants into either an awe or a neutral condition. In both the participants were asked to read a short story and try to feel as the character would have felt. In the awe story the character ascended the Eiffel Tower and viewed Paris from above, and in the neutral they ascended an unnamed tower and viewed a plain landscape from above. They then answered a time perception survey, chose a hypothetical gift (either material or experiential) and completed a final survey related to their affective state.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the neutral condition, people in the awe condition reported:

- feeling increased perception of time availability
- preferring experiential goods over material goods **
- having higher levels of life satisfaction

**** NOTE:** According to the authors “although experiences deliver more psychological benefits than material possessions, they are temporally costlier (Cooper-Martin, 1991; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003)” Therefore, awe interventions may be beneficial for developing mental resources as they encourage people towards experiential goods rather than material ones.

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected immediately after the intervention and no follow up measurements are given.

Awe: Product and service examples + other things to read

Tripy II GPS

- ▶ **Price:** €648 | **Scale:** According to the Tripy website, they already have thousands of satisfied customers.

Summary: The Tripy II GPS is a satellite navigation system which, as well as helping people to arrive at their desired location in the fastest or shortest route, also helps people to travel via the most scenic route. According to the website "Tripy's clear and simple guidance system will take you on the most scenic tourist routes. Its instructions are very easy to follow so you won't lose sight of the road or the scenery." This is a great example of implicit (or hidden) facilitative behaviour change as it is designed as a commercial product but can help people to take a break and prioritise things which are conducive to subjective wellbeing, while they are traveling.



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Shots of Awe

- ▶ **Price:** £34.95 | **Scale:** 61 monthly online users, over 3050 twitter followers,

Summary: Created by the Discovery Channel's Digital Network **Test Tube**, Shots of Awe are a weekly series of online shorts by performance philosopher Jason Silva where he 'freestyles his way into the complex systems of society, technology and human existence and discusses the truth and beauty of science in a form of existential jazz'.

This uses a highly accessible format and cultural norms to provide people with 2 and a half minute mind broadening experience of the feeling of awe.



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The Nature of Awe: Elicitors, Appraisals, and Effects

Article Taster: This paper on Awe from Berkley found that people in an awe condition (writing about a recent experience of awe) were more likely to report nature (most of these involved panoramic views, 27% vs. 7%), and exposure to art/music (20% vs. 3%) as an eliciting stimulus event than people in the happiness condition. They were also marginally more likely to report another's accomplishment (10% vs. 0%). Further, they were more likely to report wanting to spend time in nature or being creative in the next hour than those in the happiness condition.

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An Awesome Way to Make Kids Less Self-Absorbed

Article Taster: So can teachers actually create awe-inducing experiences for their students? Absolutely! In an experiment to see if awe could be elicited, Dacher and his team had one group of university students look at a Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton and another group look down a long hallway. On a follow-up survey, the only difference between the groups was that members of the T-Rex group felt like they were part of a larger whole—a defining feature of awe.

[Read Full Article](#)

Optimism

Definition:

According to Carver, Scheier and Segerstrom (2010), optimism is “an individual difference variable that reflects the extent to which people hold generalised favourable **expectancies** for their future” where optimists tend to anticipate good futures and situational outcomes and pessimists anticipate the reverse. This has also been linked also to “interpretations of the past” (i.e. learned optimism and learned helplessness) [9]

Test One: Best Possible Self Intervention [10]

Summary: People who wrote about their best possible selves for 5 minutes per day over 2 weeks felt significantly more optimistic than people who wrote about daily activities.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to test “whether optimism could be increased by imagining a Best Possible Self (BPS)”.

Method: The researchers randomly divided a sample of 54 native Dutch speaking participants into a Best Possible Self group or control group. Each group was told that they were participating in a study to measure the ‘power of visualisation’. The BPS group were asked to imagine their Best Possible Self in the personal, relational and professional domains of their lives. The control group were asked to imagine their daily activities. Both groups were instructed to practice their visualisation task for five minutes per day over a two week period.

NOTE: In the BPS group they were encouraged to start with “In the future I will” to encourage realistic and attainable responses

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the neutral condition, people in the best possible self condition reported:

- feeling a sustained level of increased post intervention optimism

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected immediately after the intervention and no follow up measurements are given.

Test Two: Attentional Bias Reduction Training [11]

Summary: People with low-self esteem who were trained to pick out positive / accepting faces from a crowd of negative / rejecting faces were more likely to ignore new negative information.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to “examine the possibility of training an inhibitory response to rejection information” i.e. to train people to focus on the positive.

Method: The researchers randomly divided a sample of 49 adults into two groups who would either undergo attentional bias training or a neutral task. The Attentional Bias Reduction Training participants were asked to find and select the positive faces within a matrix of 16 positive and negative faces. The neutral task participants were asked to find the five petal flowers within a matrix of 16 five and seven petal flowers. Each participant completed 112 training trials broken into four blocks of 28. All participants then completed an additional task which measured attentional bias regarding rejection and acceptance of negative information.

Outcome: In comparison with participants with low self-esteem in the neutral condition, people with low self-esteem who completed Attentional Bias Reduction Training reported:

- an increased ability to ignore negative social information across various formats (i.e. visual and written).

However, in people with high self-esteem there was no difference in the perception of negative social information between participants in the training group and those in the neutral condition.

NOTE: A similar study trained people to ignore disgusted faces by asking participants to identify whether a letter E or F was displayed immediately after a combination of disgusted and neutral faces. The study found that training reduced symptoms of social anxiety. This was maintained up to 4 months after the initial intervention [13]

Test Three: Cognitive Bias Modification Training [12] [13] [14]

Summary: People who completed CBMT were more likely to find optimistic interpretations for new ambiguous situations.

Detail:

Aim: The researchers aimed to identify whether an adolescent’s natural interpretative bias could be modified by training them to look for positive interpretations for ambiguous situations.

Method: A sample of 170 adolescents aged 14 to 16 was divided into a CBMT group or placebo control group. Both groups received 10 ambiguous scenarios with one word in it that had missing letters. For example “You turn on your favourite music and based on their reactions, you understand that your peers [L_KE] your choice of music.” Participants were asked to enter the first missing letter. After this, comprehension was confirmed with a question like ‘did your friends approve of your music choice’. Those in the training condition were given more scenarios where the missing word had a positive connotation e.g. “Like” than those in the control group.

Outcome: In comparison with participants in the neutral conditions, people who completed CBMT:

- were quicker at provide positive resolutions to ambiguity
- were more likely to provide positive interpretations for novel ambiguous situations
- displayed a more optimism in their general interpretational style (not just task specific).

NOTE: The findings from this study have been replicated at least two additional times. (Lau et al, 2011 n=36 and Lothmann et al 2011 n=82)

NOTE: The measurement was a composite of results collected immediately after the intervention and no follow up measurements are given.

Optimism: Product and service examples + other things to read

Mind Habits Trainer

- ▶ **Price:** Free for Online Version or \$19.99 for Full Game | **Scale:** 1,160 monthly online users

Summary: "MindHabits develops science-based video games designed to help players reduce stress and build self-confidence." The online version of the training game includes:

- **Matrix:** spotting the smiling face in a matrix of negative faces
- **Who Are You:** clicking on personal words as quickly as possible
- **Words:** finding positive words in a word search grid
- **Grow Your Chi:** grow the fur of your chi pets by clicking on smiles and personal words amongst the clouds

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Rainy Brain Sunny Brain

- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 986 monthly online users

Summary: Rainy Brain Sunny Brain is a book by Professor Elaine Fox, from the University of Oxford. The dedicated website includes a suite of three games including an optimism test, a cognitive bias modification test and an attentional training game. The website says that the idea is to take the optimism and cognitive bias tests before playing the attentional training game for "at least 3 times a week over a 6 to 8 week period" and completing the tests again. They state that users "need to do mindfulness meditation for around 10 minutes per day, 3 days a week, over the same period".

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Lumosity Brain Trainer

- ▶ **Price:** Freemium | **Scale:** 5.7m monthly online users. iPhone downloads unknown

Summary: Lumosity is the owner of the "world's largest and fastest growing database on human cognition" and the most famous cognitive training game. Though it doesn't train for optimism this provides a valuable case study / template for the future of Cognitive Bias Modification Training. This is supported by research by Stanford which has found that Lumosity training led to a reduction of symptoms and improvement in emotional wellbeing in both healthy adults and patients with Generalised Anxiety Disorder/Major Depressive Disorder. Further studies are currently ongoing.

[Read more about existing research here >](#)
[Read more about ongoing research here >](#)



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Behaviour Change in 15 Minute Sessions?

Article Taster: Imagine a method to treat anxiety and other mental health disorders that was inexpensive, effective after a few short treatments, and didn't require drugs or trained mental health professionals. "It does sound like science fiction, doesn't it?"

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Explicit and Implicit Emotion Regulation

Article Taster: It is widely acknowledged that emotions can be regulated in an astonishing variety of ways. Most research to date has focused on explicit (effortful) forms of emotion regulation. However, there is growing research interest in implicit (automatic) forms of emotion regulation.

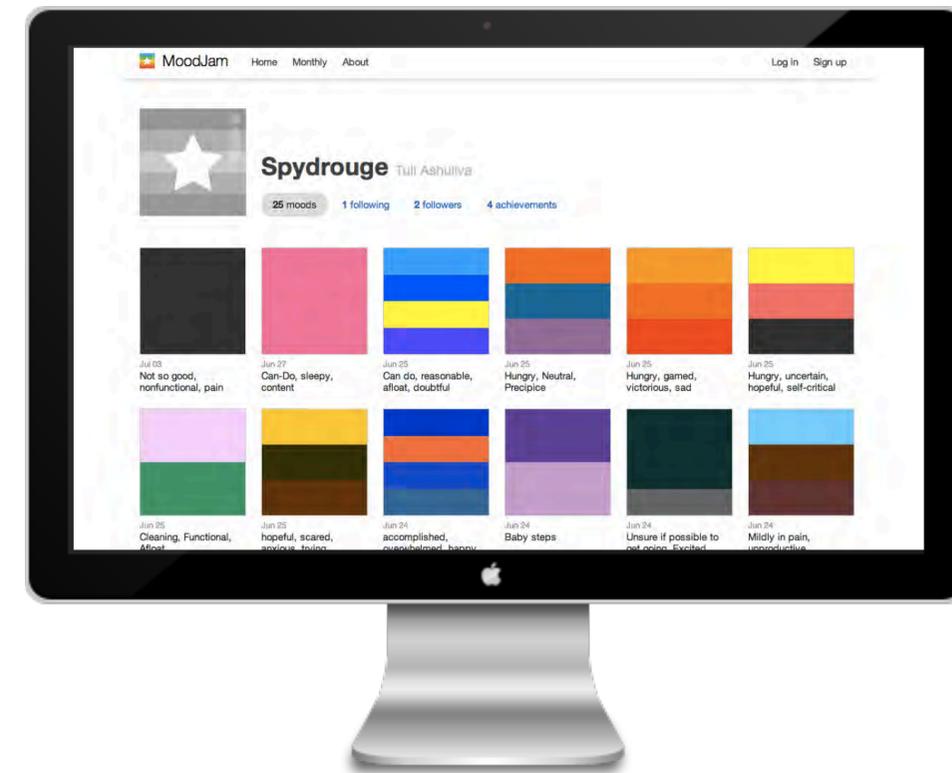
[Read Full Article](#)

Other wellbeing initiatives: product and service examples

In addition to the products and services that aim to facilitate mindfulness, gratitude, awe or optimism, there are a large number of other products and services that address aspects of wellbeing.

The products and services below aim to promote or measure aspects of subjective wellbeing (including positive emotions and life satisfaction) or psychological wellbeing (including self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth).

- ▶ Mood Jam is a web app created by Ph.D student Ian Li, who studied Human-Computer Interaction Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. Interested in creating technology that helps people to reflect on information about themselves and their behaviours, he created Mood Jam which helps people to record their moods using colour and share these with their online networks and the world.
- ▶ Though, Mood Jam does not proactively facilitate behaviour change, there is some evidence that documenting moods can help to increase levels of happiness and thus subjective wellbeing.



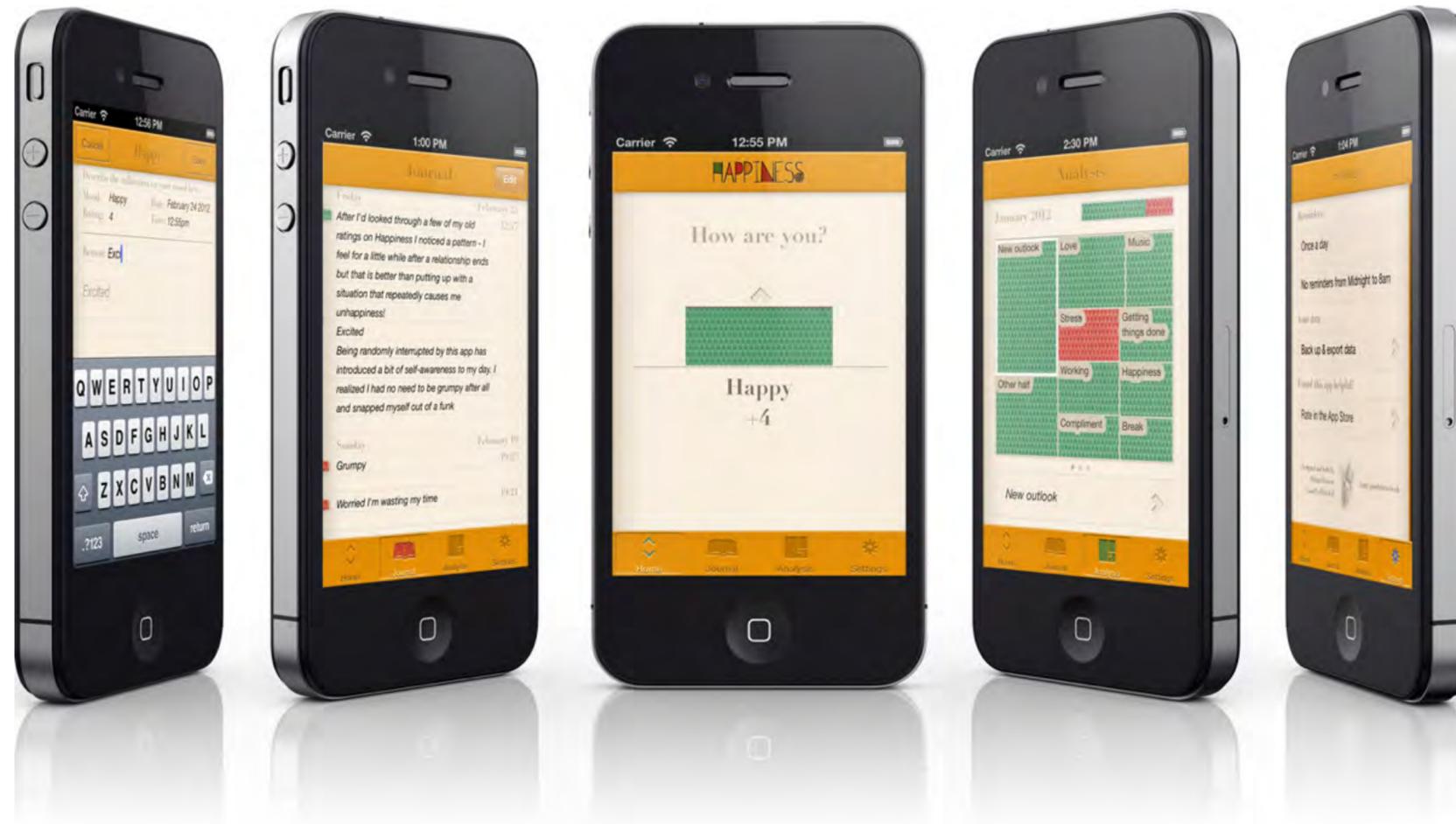
- ▶ To read about Ian Li's thesis on 'Using Contextual Information in Personal Informatics Systems to Reveal Factors that Affect Behaviour' please click here >
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 31 monthly online users | **Press and Reviews:** None

- ▶ MoodPanda is an interactive mood diary which its creators suggest can increase happiness. This is supported by evidence which suggests that documenting emotional states can help people to regulate their emotions and leave them feeling happier. The application, available online and on Android and Apple mobile platforms, allows people to update moods whenever they like and provides visual feedback in the form of charts and calendars.
- ▶ As a consequence of this, the app also provided individuals with a daily log of their moods.



- ▶ An academic paper has also been published that finds a link between subjective wellbeing and natural environments. [Click here to read >](#)
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 965 monthly online users | **Press and Reviews:** 3 stars in App Store

- ▶ Happiness is an iPhone journal app designed to help people “track [their] happiness to become more self-aware and make better decisions in your life”. Like the other journalling apps discussed previously, this falls between measurement and intervention where it helps people to mindfully dwell on and recall positive emotions, a concept shown to have a beneficial impact on subjective wellbeing. This is one of various new quantified self apps that is focusing on mental health and subjective wellbeing. It is designed for both independent use and use with a therapist.



- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** None

- ▶ Good Habits is another iPhone app from the makers of the app Happiness, which encourages people to take up and maintain good habits. It challenges users not to break the chain, based on the Jerry Seinfeld secret of productivity. Although this app is seen as a productivity app and is not well suited to activities that don't require daily completion, it encourages people to stick to habits and tasks that they would like to complete. This is a great way to facilitate environmental mastery which requires practice and repetition. The process of completion can also lead to an increase in positive self worth which has been linked to sustained psychological wellbeing



- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Small amount of coverage on major online blogs. 4.5 stars in App Store

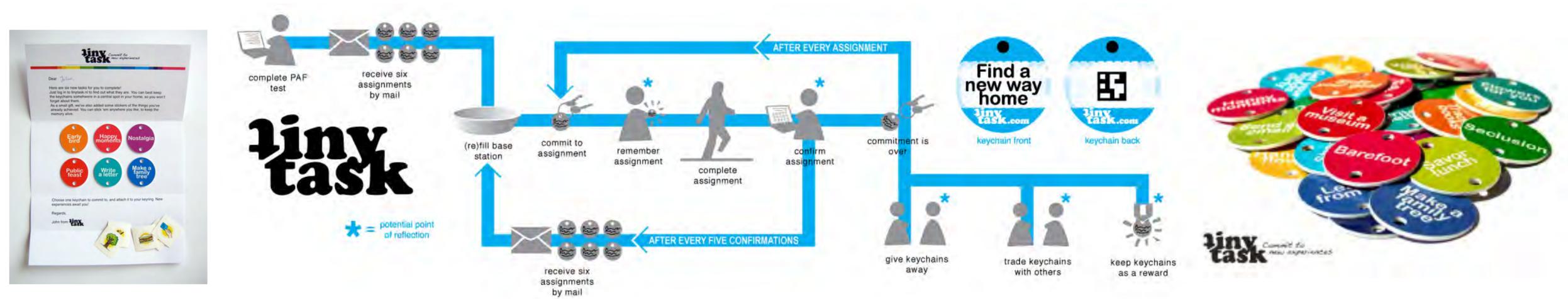
- ▶ WeTopia is a Facebook game created by Sojo Studios in partnership with companies including Mattel and Save The Children to “get everyday people involved with and enjoying acts of philanthropy”. In the game, players “start a brand new community from scratch and build a thriving population and economic system. As players collect money from residents which in turn buys crops that creates goods for shops, players also accumulate “Joy” through acts of good nature”. They can then use this virtual “Joy” to help children in the real world where Sojo Studios distributes their ad revenue amongst the charitable projects that their players decide to support.



- ▶ While not a wellbeing project, there is evidence that acts of kindness and altruism increase subjective wellbeing by increasing meaning and connection to something greater than ourselves.
- ▶ **Price:** Free (Advertising Funded) | **Scale:** 1,141 monthly online users | **Press and Reviews:** Substantial media support by Ellen DeGeneres and has had coverage in major online technology blogs including TechCrunch

*There is also a Sojo Marketplace where you can donate Sojo you have earned

- ▶ Tinytask is a project from Delft University of Technology which asks can “strategies for subjective wellbeing be translated into or supported by tangible designs that inspire and persuade people to adopt these strategies into their daily lives?”
- ▶ Their initial research focused on a product called Tinytask which provided people with small daily tasks to improve their wellbeing. This combines physical products with an online platform that helps people to take on and commit to small acts that can improve ones subjective wellbeing. As the Tinytask strapline “commit to new experiences” suggests, this project was designed to encourage active experimentation and reflective observation. This appears to build upon Fredrickson’s Broaden and Build theories of positive affect and subjective wellbeing.



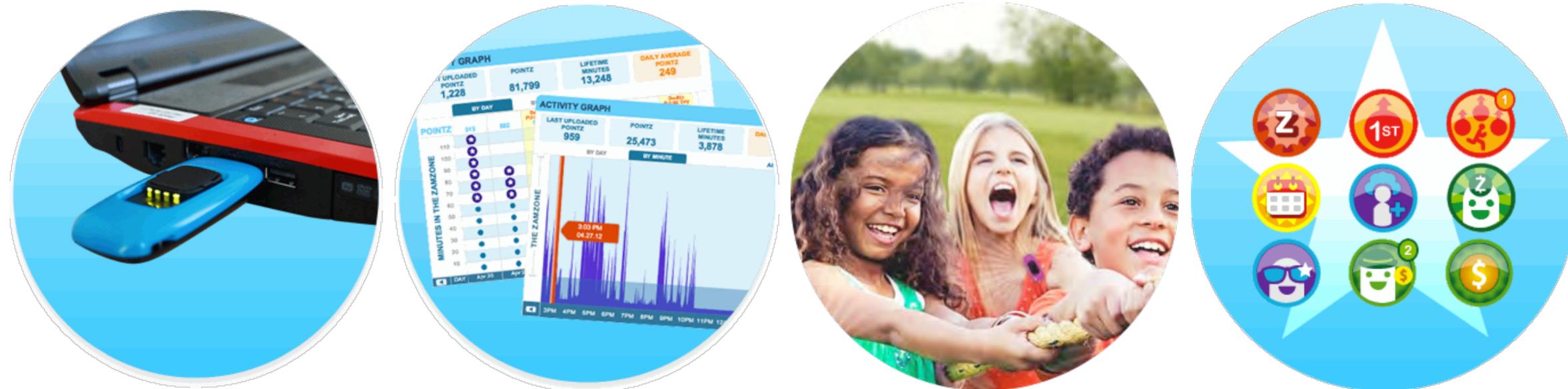
- ▶ To read more about this Delft University project please click here >
- ▶ **Price:** Non Commercial | **Scale:** Tested on 15 people | **Press and Reviews:** None

- ▶ Action for Happiness is a self acclaimed 'movement for positive social change'. Based around an online platform, members of the movement pledge to create more 'happiness' in the world around them and Action for Happiness provides small practical ideas to help people to do this.
- ▶ The ethos behind action of happiness, is to boost subjective wellbeing by focusing on what they call the **GREAT DREAM** which stands for Giving, Relating, Exercising, Appreciating, Trying Out (the daily actions), Direction, Resilience, Emotion, Acceptance and Meaning (inner attitudes). This model is based on extensive wellbeing research.



- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 3465 monthly online users. 30226 lifetime users from 142 countries. Almost 31,500 Twitter followers | **Press and Reviews:** None

- ▶ Zamzee is a positive intervention for children designed by Hope Labs in order to encourage activity and promote physical health. It is a small activity meter that fits in pockets or can be clipped to clothes. It has a USB attached which allows people to upload activities in order to earn rewards and compete with others online. Though the explicit outcomes of this intervention relate to health, this may also have a positive impact on positive affect, interpersonal relationships and sense of environmental mastery, which are all seen in the literature to be essential for flourishing.



- ▶ **Price:** \$29.95 | **Scale:** 1,141 monthly online users | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage in local and national on and offline press

- ▶ The 'Share a Coke' campaign encourages you to give your friend a bottle of Coke with their name on it. While it may be considered a marketing ploy from Coca-Cola, this campaign may actually have the potential to promote subjective wellbeing associated with gratitude, acts of kindness, meaningful connections and positive relationships with others.



- ▶ This campaign follows the trend towards personalisation (also adopted by Starbucks) by using a simple social function i.e. a name, to tie subjective wellbeing to a main stream product and brand
- ▶ **Price:** Price of a Coke | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage across international press both on and offline

- ▶ Storyland Yoga is a DVD which helps to engage children in the healthy and calming activity of yoga using storytelling, live-action, games and animation. Though not a mental wellbeing project, it is a great example of how to improve the wellbeing of children by using their existing interests and behaviours.
- ▶ Furthermore, evidence suggests that yoga can have a positive impact on psychosocial wellbeing. In a study amongst high school students, it was found that after a 10 week Kripalu yoga intervention (comprising of 28 sessions) negative affect decreased in the yoga group while increasing in the control group. However, there was no difference between the yoga and control group in change in positive affect. It was also found that mood disturbances were reduced in the yoga group while they worsened in the control group. It is important to note that this was a small preliminary study.



- ▶ **Price:** \$19.99 | **Scale:** In 2012 Playful Planet reported that over 8000 copies had been sold | **Press and Reviews:** Moderate coverage on various niche wellbeing sites. 4.5 stars on Amazon

- ▶ RDC Youngers is a project that takes the Nike sponsored Run Dem Crew to a younger generation and gives them the tools to change their lives through sport and creativity. Along with the obvious health benefits associated with getting younger people active, this initiative also helps young people to build strong positive social connections which, for some of them, would have otherwise been sought and forged within negative social circles such as gangs. The benefits of the project are two-fold as it both helps young people build 'positive relations with others', a core requirement of psychological wellbeing, and gives young people a subjective boost associated with increased self-esteem. It also tackles the issue of gang membership amongst inner city adolescents which has been seen to have a correlation with stress, anxiety, poor mental health and wellbeing.



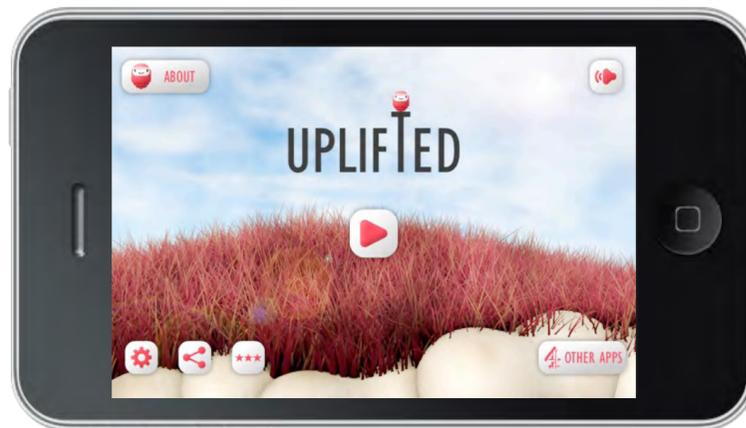
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage in niche and national press both on and offline

- ▶ In another campaign from Coca-Cola's Open Happiness initiative, which seeks to spread 'true happiness' across the world, Coke placed altruistic vending machines in several locations around the world. These vending machines enabled people to send a coke to someone somewhere in the world who they had never met before. As studies have shown that small acts of kindness can increase positive affect which, as Fredrickson's Broaden and Build theory suggests, broadens people's exploratory scope and helps them to build psychological resources, improving life satisfaction.



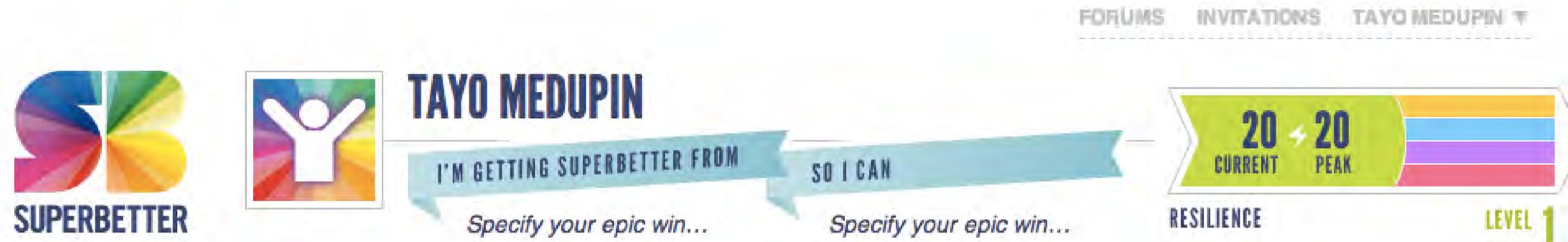
- ▶ This campaign was created as a modern day version of a 1971 Coca Cola advert, known as "Hilltop", which had the strap line "I want to buy the world a coke". This is an interesting example of moving from a communicative approach to a facilitative one.
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage in niche and national press both on and offline

- ▶ Uplifted is an iPhone game, commissioned by Channel 4, that focuses on being happy and cultivating optimism. The game is designed to help tackle the issues of poor self-esteem and unhappiness amongst young people. "Players must guide the game's protagonist, the Happ, along his journey by burrowing and joyously launching him through each level, relying on hidden friends for extra help to transform and restore his planet to its former happy state. At the end of each level, players are asked questions to get them thinking about what makes them happy and in doing so can build up a bank of answers: a personal recording of the positive things in their lives."



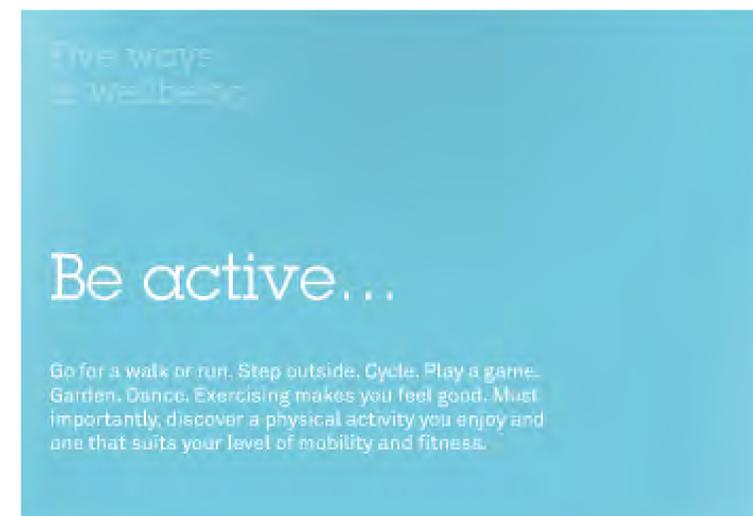
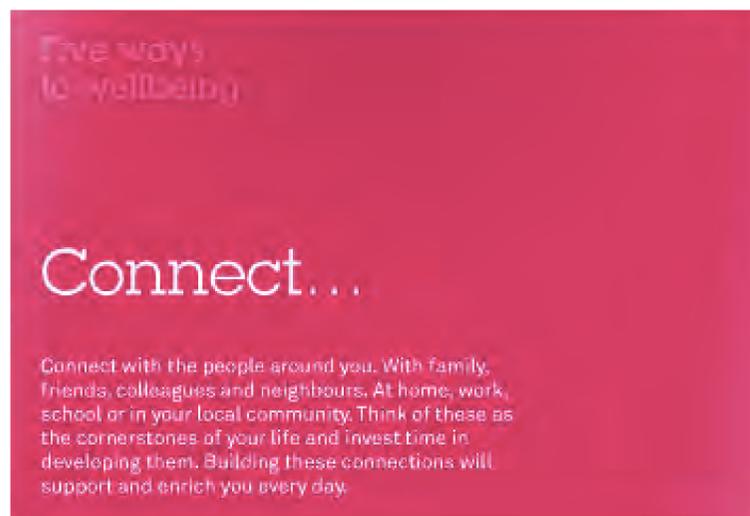
- ▶ This is essentially a mood diary, or daily journal, wrapped up as a game making it more accessible and engaging for young people.
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Moderate coverage in press, Official Honouree in the 17th Annual Webby Awards, 3.5 stars on App Store, 4 Stars on Google Play

- ▶ SuperBetter is an online tool which aims to help people to overcome challenges and build resilience in their social, mental, emotional and psychological wellbeing. As one article put it "SuperBetter is a superhero-themed game that turns getting better in multi-player adventure". Drawing on neuroscience, positive psychology and medicine, it is based around quests that lead you towards a self defined 'epic win' i.e. "having a good relationship with my family", "overcoming feelings of depression" or "learning how to swim". In this way SuperBetter is both treatment and positive psychology intervention, using the principles of subjective wellbeing to enable people to define for themselves what they want their lives to look like.



- ▶ The SuperBetter quests include choosing allies (by inviting friends to the network), collecting power ups (by completing tasks such as hug yourself), and getting future boosts (by documenting things you're looking forward to). It also challenges you to battle bad guys such as self criticism and sitting on the couch. SuperBetter is created by SuperBetter Labs which makes world-changing games powered by the science of personal and social wellbeing.
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** 4076 monthly online users | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage in international press incl. New York Times, Forbes & Bloomberg. Also featured on TED

- ▶ The Five Ways To Wellbeing Postcards by the new economics foundation provide handy reminders of how to build mental health and wellbeing.
- ▶ Based on the findings of their 2008 Mental Capital and Wellbeing, the postcards seek to promote small changes in behaviour which help to develop subjective and psychological wellbeing. It was designed to be the mental health equivalent of your 'five a day' in nutrition.
- ▶ The five ways to wellbeing are **Connect, Be Active, Take Notice, Keep Learning** and **Give**.



- ▶ **Price:** £2.04 per pack | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Moderate

Other mental illness initiatives: Product and Service Examples

The products and services listed above aim to promote wellbeing. At the same time, there is a range of innovative products and services that have been developed to support treatment for mental health problems, or help others understand what it feels like to be affected. A number of particularly interesting products and services in this category are highlighted below.

- ▶ Buddy is a product created by Side Kick Studios, which is designed as a digital support system for therapy sessions. Buddy is essentially a daily diary which uses SMS and web to make it easier for people to keep track of events that occur in the periods between therapy sessions. This reduces reliance on memory and recall and facilitates a more productive session with therapists enabling people to more easily identify positive and negative behaviours and their triggers.



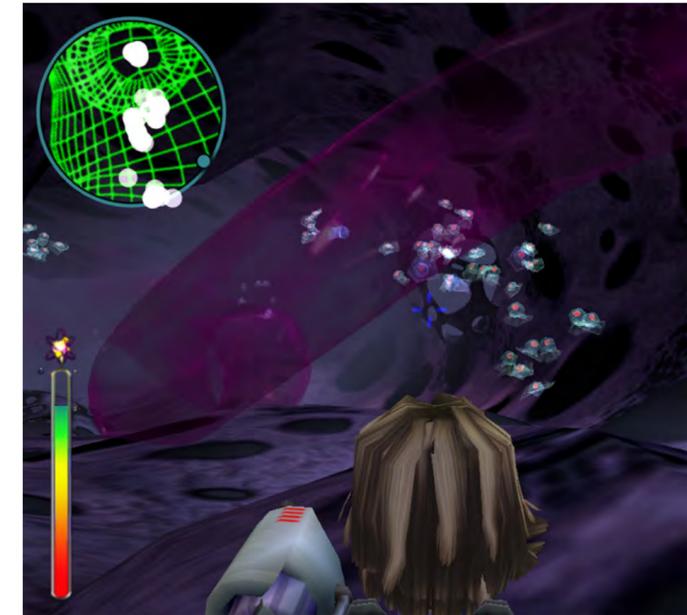
- ▶ This product is specifically designed for use with therapists working with people with depression and anxiety and as a tool for early intervention in psychosis (EiP) and thus cannot be purchased personally. Buddy is currently being rolled out nationally in partnership with various NHS trusts as well as other non-statutory providers.
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Various awards including a Lovie. Wide coverage in digital press.

- ▶ According to their website, 'Kognito is an award-winning developer of role-playing training simulations and games in the areas of health and behavioural health.' With role-playing simulations online and on mobile, Kognito's games help to train people and nurture new communication skills. One of their games, for post traumatic stress disorder, helps people living with PTSD to develop communication skills which can support development, growth and healing. The game, which uses Kognito's proprietary Human Interaction Game Engine™, simulates standard life events and allows the player to work through these scenarios in order to identify new ways of achieving positive results in real life interactions.



- ▶ Other games include those based around suicide prevention in schools, supporting LGBT Students and reducing the stigma of mental illness. There are also other simulations which do not address mental health.
- ▶ **Price:** On Quote | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Moderate

- ▶ Re-Mission is a game from Hope Labs, which enables children with cancer to visualise and attack cancer. It takes one of the activities that children love, (i.e. playing computer games) and uses it to provide them with a sense of digital control over something that they have no physical control over. This is designed to reduce feelings of anxiety which are associated with loss of control and autonomy, a core construct in psychological wellbeing. Placebo control studies found that although this intervention did not result in improved medical outcomes, it reduced anxiety and increased the likelihood that a child would stick to their prescribed medication and treatment programme.



- ▶ There is also a Re-Mission 2, a collection of 5 free online cancer fighting games
- ▶ **Price:** On Quote | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** Wide coverage across national, digital and gaming press.

- ▶ Elude is an online game designed by students at Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab, which is designed to increase understanding of and empathy for sufferers of depression. The game, which is based on a young man who moves through various metaphorical mood landscapes, resonating with “passion objects” in order to power up, overcome obstacles and eventually achieve “Happiness”. The game cleverly immerses players in feelings associated with depression to help them to understand the reality of living with depression.



- ▶ Gambit have published a few academic papers on the role of gaming in skills development, namely recursive learning, communication and problem solving To view them, [click here >](#)
- ▶ **Price:** Free | **Scale:** Unknown | **Press and Reviews:** None

References

- [1] http://www.livingmindfully.co.uk/downloads/Mindfulness_Report.pdf
- [2] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2848393/#!po=4.16667>
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Contact

This document was created by Shift, formerly known as We Are What We Do, as part of the research phase of a product development process aimed at improving wellbeing amongst young people in the UK, commissioned by The Nominet Trust.

For more information see shiftdesign.org.uk

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