

Understanding The Flourish Model



SECURITY

RELATIONSHIP

INDEPENDENCE

ENGAGEMENT

FULFILMENT

CONTRIBUTION

GROWTH



Wendy Ellyatt

For the last thirty years Wendy has been fascinated with what creates lives of meaning and purpose. Founder of the Project and creator of the Flourish model - originally derived from her interest in the work of Richard Barrett - she has now combined her expertise in early human development with her interest in natural systems design, to help develop a range of tools that promote and support the creation of sustainable societies and cultures of lifelong learning.

She is the founder and Chief Executive of the Save Childhood/Flourish Movement and in 2014 launched National Children's Day UK as a major platform for celebrating the rights and freedoms of childhood. A well-known writer, speaker and catalyst, she is a long-time fellow of the RSA and

has also 'walked her talk' within her local town of Cheltenham, by establishing two of its most dynamic and asset-based community initiatives.

What does fulfil us and produce sustainable states of wellbeing? How do we protect both children and adults from systems that undermine our inherent creativity and potential? How do we ensure that we can all feel valued and connected? Her work has explored the vital importance of strong early attachment and relationships, the lifelong impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), the need for us to review and transform current educational systems design, the pressures on modern childhood, family and community life, the importance of novelty, creativity and playful thinking - and our shared need for meaningful relationship, community and contribution.

"I wanted to create something that could reach everybody, no matter what their background or role in life, and that would inspire everyone to think about what a 'Good Life' really looks like. I also wanted to highlight the absolutely vital role of early human development and to show what happens if we do not all honour the power and wisdom of childhood"

Wendy Ellyatt, 2018

Introducing the Flourish Model

“It is easier and cheaper to create strong, happy and resilient children than it is to mend struggling, unhappy and broken adults”

Across the world people are asking what creates happy, meaningful lives and whether the systems that we have created are supporting this. It has become increasingly clear to everyone that GDP is not enough to measure the wellbeing of communities and populations and that true wealth is about much more than money. It has also become clear that levels of anxiety, obesity, depression and loneliness have all been rising significantly. Through the new Science of Early Childhood Development **another thing that has become evident is that the experiences that we have in the earliest years of our life really do lay the foundations for our wellbeing in the years ahead.**

The Seven Core Aspects

The Flourish model suggests that there are seven core aspects to human flourishing that reflect the dynamics of natural systems and that need to be fully acknowledged and incorporated for us to be supported in becoming the ‘best version of our selves’. It emphasises the crucial importance of early human development and shows the likely consequences at each level when children are exposed to unnatural and limiting, rather than natural and nurturing, early environments. As an ecological model it also shows that the health and wellbeing of parents, families and communities is essential to the healthy development and wellbeing of children.

The Flourish Model is:

- a natural systems-based approach
- a tool to support the understanding of the seven aspects of human wellbeing
- a tool that underpins the importance of diversity and equality
- a way of assessing and supporting the wellbeing needs of local populations
- a way of promoting and supporting individual wellbeing
- a way of emphasizing the vital importance of healthy early human development

Flourishing is our birthright

Human beings are amazing creatures. We are fine-tuned and biologically wired to learn, grow and develop in diverse ways that lead us to fulfil our individual sense of purpose and potential. We are designed to flourish.

Unfortunately, in many countries around the world we are seeing increasingly high levels of mental and emotional distress as people struggle with the erosion of community and the pressures of modern life. We are all experiencing a set of environmental challenges that were completely unknown to previous generations.

The rise in technology, the increasing influence of the media, the lack of contact with nature, the need to perform at school and work, the strain of being always on call, the challenge of achieving any sort of sensible work/life balance and the demands of having to look right and be openly exposed to the judgment of others, have all steadily eroded the environments and experiences we need in order to be happy and healthy. Levels of depression,

anxiety, and loneliness have all shot upward, with the simple pleasures and happiness of life seemingly increasingly difficult for us to experience.

The Flourish Model explains, in a simple and easy to understand way, what we all need to achieve natural, healthy human growth and development - and what happens to us if our environments do not support these needs. It also explains how important it is that we can all follow our own unique passions and paths, rather than ones that are not aligned with who we really are.

The development of values and beliefs

We all begin our lives with basic human needs that then shape what we want and value – our motivations and behaviors stem from having our needs met (or not) and our values are a reflection of these needs. These needs encompass the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of what it is to be human.

They comprise: **Security, Relationship, Independence, Engagement, Fulfillment, Contribution and Growth**



Flourishing consists of...

NO MATTER WHERE CHILDREN LIVE IN THE WORLD THEY ALL HAVE THE SAME CORE NEEDS

To flourish all children need their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs met.

And so do the adults who help shape their identity.

HUMAN NEEDS



Human feelings and thoughts are how we shape our beliefs and values – and in the early years these are created by our genetic make-up and the neurological pathways that we lay down in response to our life experience i.e. Nature and Nurture.

What's totally amazing is that no one person that has ever lived has been the same as any other – so we are all absolutely unique and nobody else will experience the world in quite the same way as you or I.

As we grow we start to create a layer of beliefs about the way the world works that shape our worldviews and that impact our natural development - these become our personal mindsets and the lenses through which we interpret everything that happens to us.

Depending on our experiences we learn to prioritise and value some needs over others and develop our core life skills in

worlds that are very diverse.

If the environments in which we grow are positive and nurturing we develop healthy mindsets and are able to maximise our natural development and potential in line with our innate dispositions – which helps us to grow up as happy, healthy and fulfilled adults. We are also able to learn and bounce back quickly from any set-backs and failures - which helps us to see them from the perspective of a 'glass half full'

But if we grow up in difficult or stressful environments our natural development is compromised and we adopt limiting belief and value systems that help us to survive, but which limit our ability to become happy, healthy adults. We personalise and struggle with any set-backs and failures – which make us see them from the perspective of a 'glass half empty'.

FOUNDATIONS OF WELLBEING

7 LEVELS

NATURAL GROWTH:

Positive mindsets and dispositions and the healthy development of the system as a whole

UNNATURAL GROWTH:

Potentially limiting mindsets and dispositions and the compromised development of the system as a whole

GROWTH

Passion, Purpose, Expansion, Vitality, Abundance, Wisdom, Sense of Wonder, Awe, Love

Disconnection, Flatness, Lack of Meaning, Lack of Purpose, Sense of Loss, Sadness, Isolation, Diminishment, Stagnation, Anger

CONTRIBUTION

Feeling that you matter, Having a Voice, Sense of Connection, Collaboration, Caring for Others, Empathy, Openness, Inclusion, Trust, Compassion, Humility

Feeling no-one cares, Anger, Frustration, Self-interest, Self-focus, Lack of concern for others, Greed, Arrogance, Superiority, Contempt

FULFILMENT

Self Expression, Self Reflection, Flow, Thrill, Satisfaction, Authenticity, Integrity, Joy, Contentment

Boredom, Frustration, Lack of Interest, Apathy, Avoidance, Greed, Unhappiness, Discontentment, Depression

ENGAGEMENT

Personal Challenge, Concentration, Play, Risk-taking, Problem-Solving, Excitement, Creativity, Curiosity, Desire to Explore, Desire to Learn, Resilience, Optimism

External Control, Rigidity, Predictability, Anxiety, Caution, Comfort with the Known, Addiction, Measurability, External Motivation, Need for Rewards, Pessimism

INDEPENDENCE

Self Mastery, Self Regulation, Internal Discipline, Physical Achievement, Positive Body Image, Intrinsic Motivation, Confidence, Challenge as Learning, Knowledge

Reliance on Others, External Discipline, Duty, Impatience, Passivity, Confusion, Self-Doubt, Negative Body Image, Fear of Failure, Inferiority, Value linked to things, Challenge as Threat, Lack

RELATIONSHIP

Nurturing, Care, Affection, Attention, Feedback, Support, Validation, Patience, Respect, Satisfaction, Emotional Fulfilment, Humour, Laughter

Neglect, Lack of Attention, Lack of Connection, Isolation, Abuse, Exclusion, Distrust, Control, Undermining, Disrespect, Dislike, Dissatisfaction, Loneliness

SECURITY

Safety, Positive Contact with Environment, Health, Positive Physical Growth, Positive Neurological Growth, Familiarity, Comfort, Connection to Nature

Threat, Insecurity, Negative contact with Environment, Fear, Disassociation, Vulnerability, Compromised Physical Growth, Compromised Neurological Growth

Every person has their own unique biological identity and each individual also develops their own unique combination of experiences and perceptions about the world.

There are four different sorts of biological memory that inform who we are, but most are ones of which we are not consciously aware. **Underneath all of these is a natural intelligence that is always trying to bring us into a sense of balance and wholeness.**

Evolutionary Memory (Unconscious)

The fact that we are a specific species and carry with us all the biological survival information that has been steadily built up

Epigenetic Memory (Unconscious)

The biological information that we

carry forward from the environmental experiences of our own direct ancestors. For example we now know that if grandparents lived through a period of famine, their grandchildren are more prone to eating disorders.

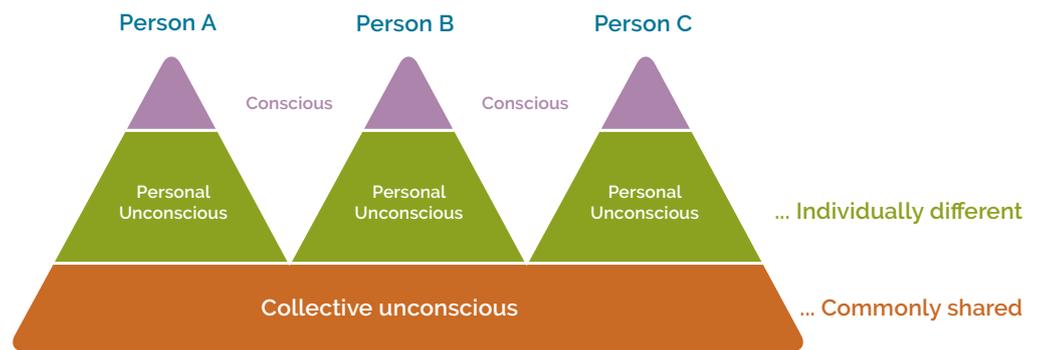
Genetic Memory (Unconscious)

The biological information that we carry forward from our own parents and that is then moulded by our unique personal environmental experiences. We know that genes can be turned on or off depending on the nature of these experiences.

Intellectual Memory (Conscious)

The neurological structures and connections that are shaped by our unique environmental experiences.

Human Memories



It's all about energy

All living things contain a dynamic life force that is expressed through input, throughout and output and we perform best (are in a flow state) when these are all in balance.

Plants and animals have innate biological instincts and intuitions that draw them to exactly the right things they need to grow, but humans have evolved with the free will to choose for themselves what they want from the environment (which means that sometimes we do not choose the things that are actually best for us!).

INPUT - bringing energy into our system

Clean air and water, access to the natural world, eating well, feeling safe, physical exercise and play, adequate rest and reflection, having good relationships and

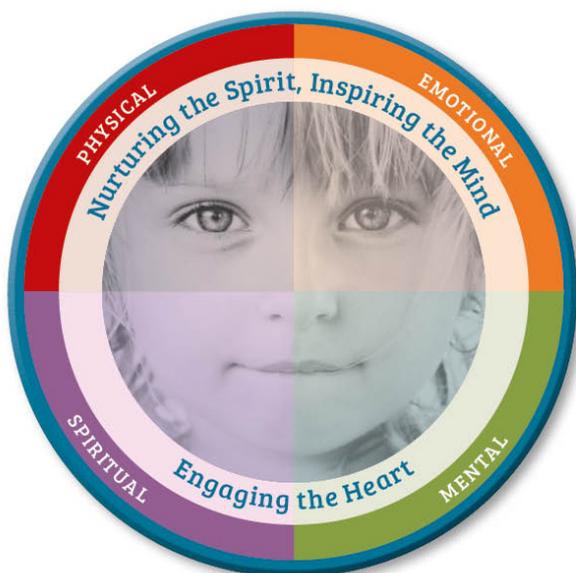
being able to spend time learning about the world and the other people that you share it with.

THROUGHPUT - efficiently processing all the items that enter our system

Air, water, food and all the bodily and psychological information that we receive about the world we are living in and that help us develop our own understanding, skills and abilities

OUTPUT - removing all the items that no longer serve us and sharing our ongoing knowledge and understanding with others

Letting go of waste / old information and communicating / being able to express our unique skills, experiences, feelings and thoughts with others.



To grow and flourish children need to feel whole

Wholeness is maintained by Nurturing the Spirit, Inspiring the Mind and Engaging the Heart

We have each been designed to constantly learn and grow and to find ways of expressing our own unique identity and potential within a world of others (who are also striving to do the same).

What's tricky is that when we are young we are constantly being told by others what we should do and how we should be (so that we can fit in) so we adopt things that don't really resonate with what we really need or who we really are.

That's why it's important that the cultures and systems that we live within are aligned with our own values and allow us to be as real and authentic as possible.

The Early Years (conception to eight) is the single most important period of human life

It is easier and cheaper to create strong, happy and resilient children than it is to mend struggling, unhappy and broken adults.

This period literally shapes our biology and how we then see and experience the world, so the early years is recognised as the single most important developmental phase of anyone's life.

It is during this earliest phase of life that we grow our physical and mental structures and capacities, shape our sense of self and steadily adopt the external values of the adult world. **Most of our limiting or self-sabotaging beliefs are formed in early childhood.**

Depending on whether the systems that we experience support or compromise our natural, healthy development, we will grow up into happy, confident problem-solvers and risk-takers or more anxious, passive or possibly aggressive individuals – and the way that we are made to feel as children can impact how we feel about ourselves for the rest of our lives. Enormous amounts of money are spent by social care and health systems around the world trying to mend the biological and psychological damage created in adults during this vital period.

Our wellbeing is negatively impacted if we can't be who we truly are. How do you know your unique self?

Think about...

What you **love**

What you are **good at**

Passion

Purpose

Interests

Expressions

What you are **fulfilled by**

It's important that everyone can flourish

It isn't enough to just get things right in the early years though. We all live embedded in larger systems and for children and societies to flourish, we all need to be supported in looking after our own health and wellbeing. Parents in particular need to be able to look after their own needs and to be helped to understand how their children develop and grow – and leaders and decision makers need to think about whether the systems they have created are human-centred or systems-centred.

As adults it's also important to understand

that, even if our childhoods were difficult and challenging, once we have been helped to understand why we are who we are (because as children we will do what we need to do to survive), we can then start to use our own unique experiences to help and support others.

We do not have to carry forward the patterns of the past, but can instead choose to become the 'best version of our selves' and take control of who we really want to be. **Developing a sense of unique identity is really important, but we are only truly in balance when this is combined with community, connection, and contribution.**

ADULTS CAN CHANGE THEIR ENVIRONMENTS. CHILDREN HAVE TO LIVE IN THE WORLDS THAT ADULTS HAVE MADE

The wellbeing of adults is dependent on the same need for meaning and wholeness and is essential for the wellbeing of children.

CHILD ADULT WELLBEING MODEL

SEVEN LEVELS	EARLY CHILDHOOD	ADULT
GROWTH	Being able to constantly build on existing learning and understanding. Reaching out into novelty. Moving from the known into the unknown.	Inner exploration and development. Spiritual development. Exploring the subconscious. Self Awareness and Realisation. Sense of deep connection and meaning.
CONTRIBUTION	Being listened to and validated. Being asked for your thoughts and opinions. Learning to understand the thoughts of others and that you are part of a social group.	Feeling valued. Having your voice heard. Feeling that your thoughts and opinions matter. Collaboration. Giving back. Enjoying working with others. Being in service to others
FULFILMENT	Being able to express yourself and be understood. Being able to achieve the things that you set out to do. Receiving positive feedback.	Knowing that you are doing your best. Being able to balance your skills, capacities and understanding with the tasks you take on. Achieving what you set out to do. Overcoming obstacles. Seeing the positive result of your actions.
ENGAGEMENT	Being given the time and support to play with the environment, test out ideas and spend time doing the things that fascinate and interest you	Being able to spend time doing the things that challenge, fascinate and interest you (even if they are difficult and frustrating!)
INDEPENDENCE	Being supported in exploring the environment and taking risks. Learning to test your social and physical skills and to self-regulate	Being able to step out of your comfort zone and take on new tasks, roles and challenges. Learning from failure. Being emotionally strong and resilient.
RELATIONSHIP	Loving, nurturing early relationships and feedback. Experiencing stable, sensitive and responsive caregiving	Positive relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Emotional Intelligence
SECURITY	Positive pre-natal and birth experiences, welcoming safe environment, loving care, appropriate nutrition	Safe home, financial security, enough to eat, healthy environment, adequate exercise

The Flourish Project works with its core partners to offer a whole systems solution to understanding and promoting The Ecology of Wellbeing. It helps build cultures of respect, inclusion and equity, that have the wellbeing of children and families at their heart.

The Flourish System

As they grow and develop children's needs shift and their values evolve, ultimately manifesting as the beliefs and behaviours that shape who they are as adults. The values that are important to us at any moment in time are a reflection

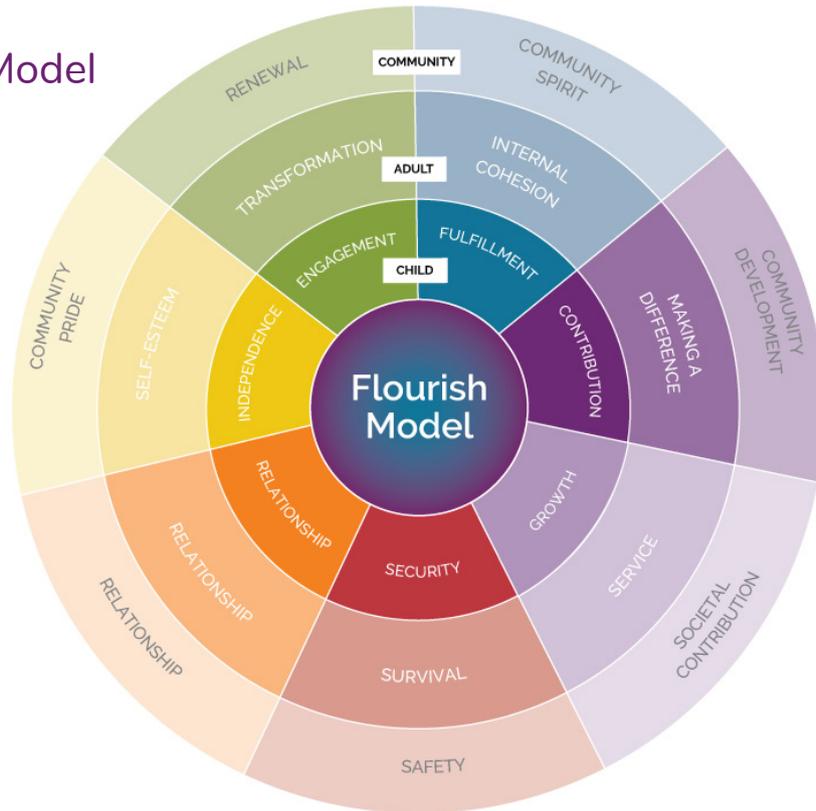
of our current needs and our unmet needs from the past. Some of our values change priority as we move through the different stages of our development, whereas other values stay the same. Values can be positive or potentially limiting (fear-based).

Children's lives are embedded within the larger systems of family, community and culture and their values and views are shaped by the worlds of others.

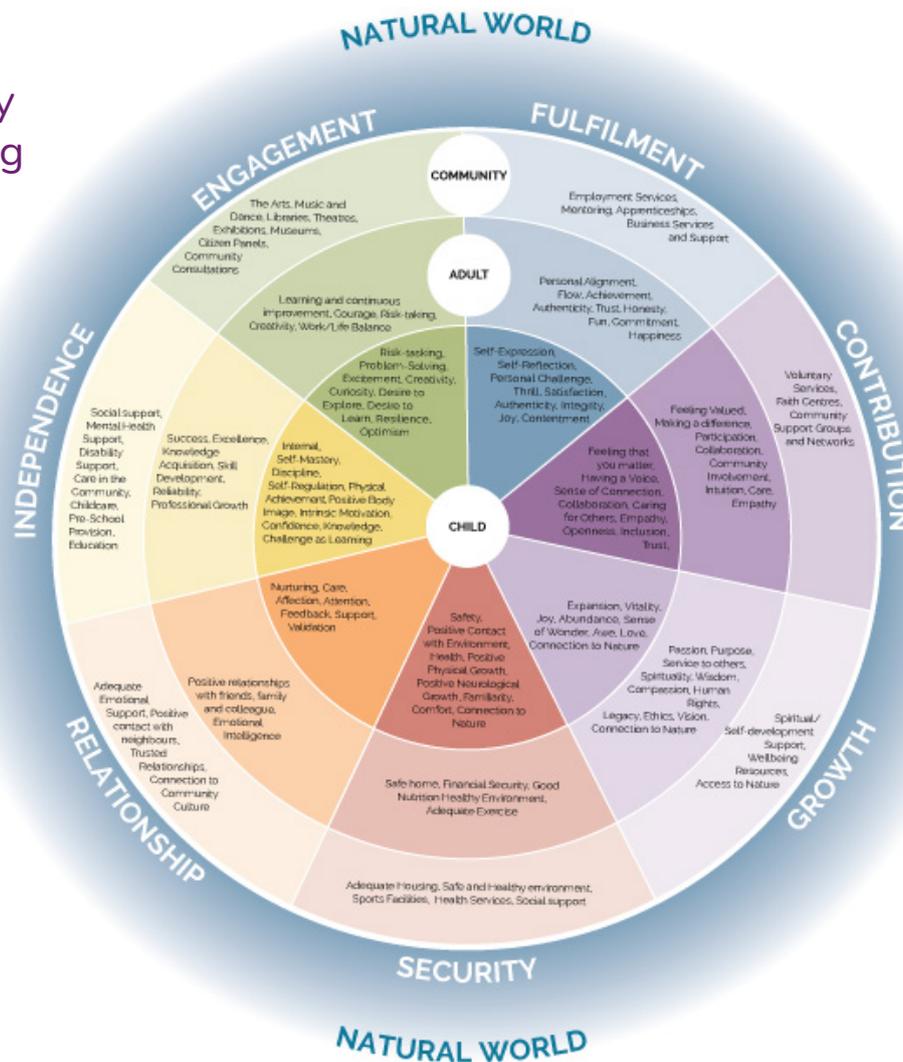
Positive values enable us to live authentically and become the 'best version of our selves'. We feel at ease with ourselves and others and we feel comfortable in our physical and social environment. Positive values promote personal growth and create internal cohesion.

Potentially limiting values are created by the fears and anxieties that arise when we are not able to meet our intrinsic needs. In childhood these come from being exposed to unnatural and inhibiting environments rather than those that promote natural ongoing growth and learning.

The Flourish Model



The Ecology of Wellbeing



Flourish Questions

- What is a 'Good Life'? And how do I achieve it?
- How can I be helped to be the 'Best version of my Self'?
- In what way are the current systems that we live and work in aligned with our values and those we want for our children and grandchildren? Are they enhancing or diminishing our natural life energies?
- How could we move from societies where anxiety, loneliness and depression have become a norm to ones that prioritise wellbeing and nurture every person as a unique being full of potential?
- How can we ensure that everyone can Flourish?

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The Flourish Model was created by Wendy Elyatt and was originally inspired by Richard Barrett's Seven Levels of Consciousness