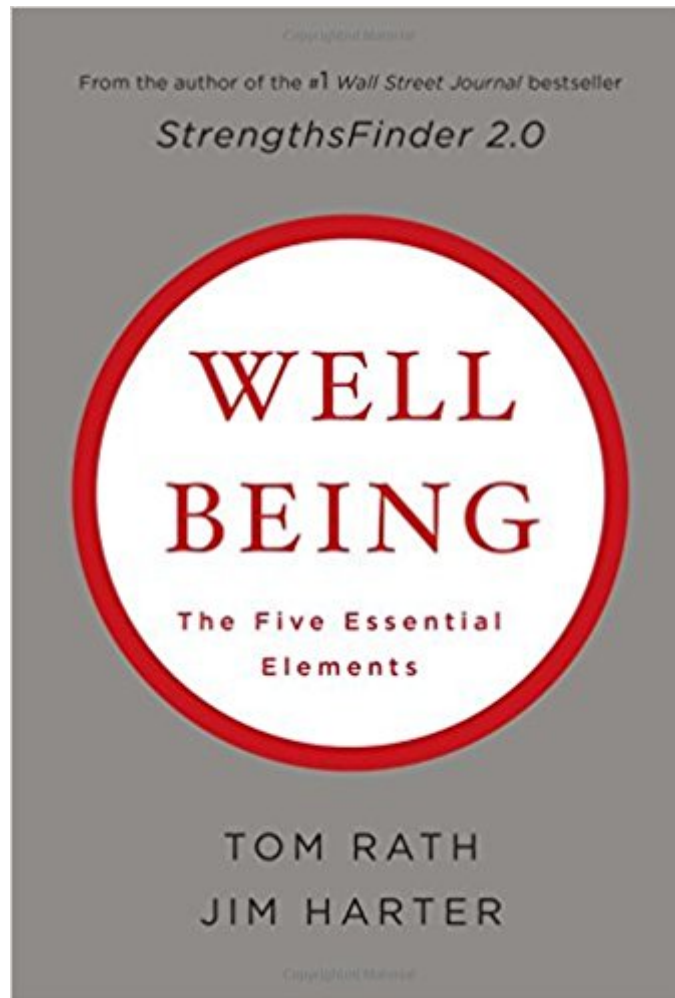




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# Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements



## Synopsis

Much of what we think will improve our wellbeing is either misguided or just plain wrong. Contrary to what many people believe, wellbeing isn't just about being happy. Nor is it only about being wealthy or successful. And it's certainly not limited to physical health and wellness. In fact, focusing on any of these elements in isolation may drive us to frustration and even a sense of failure. When striving to improve our lives, we are quick to buy into programs that promise to help us make money, lose weight, or strengthen our relationships. While it might be easier to treat these critical areas in our lives as if they operate independently, they don't. Gallup's comprehensive study of people in more than 150 countries revealed five universal, interconnected elements that shape our lives: The Five Essential Elements Career Wellbeing Social Wellbeing Financial Wellbeing Physical Wellbeing Community Wellbeing Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements will provide you with a holistic view of what contributes to your wellbeing over a lifetime. Written in a conversational style by #1 New York Times bestselling author Tom Rath and bestselling author Jim Harter, Ph.D., this book is filled with fascinating research and novel ideas for boosting your wellbeing in each of these five areas. By the time you finish reading this book, you should have a better understanding of what makes life worthwhile. This will enable you to enjoy each day and get more out of your life -- and perhaps most importantly, boost the wellbeing of your friends, family members, colleagues, and others in your community. (Each copy of this book includes a unique ID code for Gallup's online Wellbeing Finder, a program designed to help you track and improve your wellbeing over time.)

## Book Information

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Why It Pays to Give a Damn: The Business of Wellbeing -- From CNBC (read more: [cnbc.com/id/37149447](http://cnbc.com/id/37149447)) "The Gallup recommendations take immediate gratification and turn it on its head, making short-term satisfaction an ally rather than an enemy." --The San Francisco Chronicle "the Wellbeing website...is as addictive as crack" --The Huffington Post The Gallup recommendations take immediate gratification and turn it on its head, making short-term satisfaction an ally rather than an enemy. --The San Francisco Chronicle The Wellbeing website...is as addictive as crack. --The Huffington Post

Over the past decade, Gallup has introduced the concepts of strengths-based development and employee engagement to more than 20 million people around the world -- largely through the #1 Wall Street Journal bestseller StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath and the New York Times bestseller 12: The Elements of Great Managing, which was coauthored by engagement expert Jim Harter. In Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements, these bestselling authors team up to share the results of a landmark study of wellbeing and its implications for organizations and individuals. Their groundbreaking research reveals how organizations can help employees boost their overall wellbeing -- from their satisfaction with their careers to their financial security and level of community involvement. After conducting this extensive study, Rath and Harter discovered that much of what we think will improve our wellbeing is either misguided or just plain wrong. When striving to improve our lives, we're quick to buy into programs that promise to help us make money, lose weight, or strengthen our relationships. While it might be easier to treat these critical areas in our lives as if they are independent, they're not. Gallup's comprehensive study of people in more than 150 countries revealed five universal, interconnected elements that shape our lives: Career Wellbeing, Social Wellbeing, Financial Wellbeing, Physical Wellbeing, and Community Wellbeing. Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements provides you with a holistic view of what contributes to your wellbeing over a lifetime. Written in a conversational style, this book is filled with fascinating research and innovative ideas for boosting your wellbeing in each of these five areas. As a complement to the book, you'll have the opportunity to use Gallup's online Wellbeing Finder to track and improve your wellbeing. By the time you finish reading this book, you'll have a better understanding of what makes life worthwhile. This will enable you to enjoy each day and get more out of your life -- while boosting the wellbeing of your friends, family members, colleagues, and others in your community.

I work for a company that promotes wellness. I was actually really confused when I first heard of

these "five essential elements of wellbeing" and thought someone must have made an error in the presentation I was listening to because there was absolutely no mention of any psychological or emotional wellness contributing to wellbeing. I found out it's not one of the five components. So I bought the book, thinking surely it would explain the absence in some reasonable way to me. Not so. It's just... missing. As if the 57.7 million Americans with mental disorders could just get a better job or improve their social lives and perhaps their illness would disappear? I'm not saying the components mentioned aren't important- all of those things contribute to the authors definition of wellbeing: "the things that are important to how we think about and experience our lives." But I found that the authors' "advice" even on these other topics was pretty flimsy. In the career wellbeing section we are advised to "avoid sustained periods of unemployment (over a year) when you are actively seeking a job but unable to find one." Since most unemployed people are not unemployed by choice, and the author is actually acknowledging that they are unable to find a job...I fail to see how that is at all helpful (and it's actually a bit insulting... to the unemployed person and my intelligence). Basically, the views here are quite simplistic. We found out that people with "high wellbeing" are passionate about their work...so everyone should have a job they are passionate about. What a lovely idea! How exactly, does that work? Since it's probably more realistic in many cases to say that a person would be unable to leave a job they are unhappy with due to financial obligations and a poor job market, focus might be better placed on improving an employees' outlook (psychological/emotional) or improving the workplace environment. I think most of the book, and the financial chapter in particular, is speaking to a smaller percentage of Americans who do have more economic choices and freedom... in the midst of our present economy, and when the reality is that a third of the country has a household income of less than \$25k, advising people to spend money on vacations for "the experience" comes across as a bit out of touch. Reporting data is one thing. Interpreting what that data really means is much more complicated. This book does a great disservice to the data by leaving big chunks of who we are out of the picture.

Well Being is a pretty good book for those interested in learning about well-being. The five areas they have identified are certainly important ones and people who with minimal stress and reasonable satisfaction in those five areas are indeed more likely to be happy with their lives. However, there are several problems with the approach taken by the authors. First, by quoting lots of studies and polls, they make it sound like this is all very scientific, and therefore to an age that over-idolizes science, they make it sound like they must be right. But as a scientist myself, I see people misusing science all the time as well as expecting that it can answer everything when it

cannot. Second, the authors don't say much about the likelihood that how well one is satisfied with each of their five areas is as much dependent on one's attitude toward it as any objective facts about one's career, friends, finances, etc. I would humbly suggest that if you tend to be satisfied with what you have in each area, you will have a pretty good well-being, and those attitudes are partly familial and partly dependent on whether one has found a spiritual or religious understanding of what life is all about. There are only 2 sentences in the book about this, perhaps because the authors prefer that readers focus on their topic areas rather than on what is more fundamental.

I've adopted the well-being philosophy in everything I do and everything I do can be placed within one of the five elements. Research shows that for a person to be truly satisfied with their life they need to thrive in these five elements of well-being: physical, financial, community, career, and social. It's not enough to thrive in only a few. You know the saying, "Money doesn't buy happiness." Well here's the research. If you are not thriving in even one category, it can have a major impact on your overall wellbeing. The key to implementing strategies to improve your well-being is small steps. Take on one element at a time. But when you move on to the next element, you need to continue what you've been doing to improve the other. Gradually adding small things for each area to make an until you are thriving in all five. It's not impossible, but it take patience, persistence, and positivity. This book comes with an access code to take WellbeingFinder which will allow you to track your overall and elemental well-being daily and monthly through a series of questions. It really works! I recommend this book to anyone looking to discover why they don't feel satisfied when it feels like they may have everything they need.

This was a great conceptual way to look at essential elements of my own well-being, get a baseline measurement and track over 6 months to improve aspects of my overall well-being. I set some goals, and had accountability reminders to help me work toward those goals. I will recommend it to other members of my team, or anyone struggling to take small but consistent actions to improve their well-being. Revision: after 1 year of using this book & online resource to track my well-being, I can honestly say this had a tremendous impact on me. I will recommend it to friends and colleagues alike. I wish there were translations in other languages - I would like to share with my international colleagues as well.

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