

Student Devised Assessment Accompanying Piece

"Ingredients of Wellbeing", my Student Devised Assessment (SDA), is a creative piece designed to address the ongoing wellbeing crisis affecting university students nationwide. This issue is underscored by findings from a survey by Student Minds (2023), which revealed that 57% of students reported experiencing mental health challenges, while 27% had a formally diagnosed mental health condition. Building on insights from the prior assessment that offered guidance to universities on tackling the wellbeing crisis, this project shifts its focus to advising the students directly. Drawing on key concepts from the IL128 module, the "Ingredients to Wellbeing" kit directs students to actively improve their self-care and overall wellbeing. The rest of the accompanying piece is organised as follows. Section 2 reflects on how and why the piece was devised. Section 3 explains why the medium of baking was chosen for the piece.

SDA Composition

Purpose

Featuring five cupcakes, each adorned with an image representing a specific wellbeing step, "Ingredients of Wellbeing" is a wellbeing kit designed to be sent to university students experiencing poor mental wellbeing to support them in learning simple steps to enhance their wellbeing. The visual presentation of the kit transforms essential wellbeing actions into a friendly and accessible format that can be easily understood by the student and provides an alternative to traditional methods (such as academic papers) which can be overwhelming or inaccessible. Moreover, each cupcake represents a different aspect of Foresight Mental Capital's (2008) "5 a Day" wellbeing project is accompanied by a suggested action that the student can easily attempt. And, as the student completes each wellbeing step, they are encouraged to reward themselves by enjoying the corresponding cupcake. By the time all the cupcakes have been finished, the individual will have actively engaged with each of the five wellbeing steps and at that point should have a higher level of wellbeing compared to when they first received the kit.

The inspiration for the wellbeing kit came following inspiration from Week 3's lecture on self-maintenance and Week 9's lecture on the arts. Week 3 emphasised the importance of self-care amid rising levels of stress and anxiety among university students. With universities often struggling to meet the growing demand for mental health support, I was determined to find a way to help students, who may otherwise not be able to receive help, to directly take control of their own wellbeing. Moreover, the week 9 lecture, which discussed art as a therapeutic method, encouraged me to achieve this aim through a creative project. Despite not being an artist (or a baker), the practical exercise during the lecture, where we were tasked with drawing a campus location, genuinely elevated my sense of well-being. This experience motivated me to incorporate art as a form of expression for my SDA.

Design

The wellbeing kit is designed with a two-part structure; The lid of the box outlines the "5 a Day" wellbeing steps with a suggested action, that the students can complete for each step, accompanying each step. The suggested actions are each supported by academic theory that has been taught during the IL128 module:

- 1) **Connect** – Have a conversation with a friend
 - Week 4: The Science of Wellbeing
 - o Leuner et al. (2017) found that oxytocin, a hormone released under conditions of bonding and close relationships, stimulated neural growth (in rat hippocampus)
- 2) **Be Active** – Exercise and play a sport
 - Week 8: Physical Activity and Wellbeing

Individual Assignment

- Elvasky et al.'s (2005) experimental found that participants who had high levels of physical activity reported higher physical self-esteem and affect which lead to a higher quality of life
- 3) **Take Notice** – Have a walk in a park and take note of your surroundings
 - Week 3: Self-Maintenance
 - Inspired by the week 3 task where students had to go to different areas of campus and reflect on their feelings and what they noticed about the environment
- 4) **Keep Learning** – Try a new skill or read a book on a new topic
 - Week 2: Interdisciplinary Wellbeing and Public Health
 - Individuals with higher levels of education are less likely to suffer from lower mental wellbeing
- 5) **Give** – Volunteer at a charity and help others
 - Week 2: Interdisciplinary Wellbeing and Public Health
 - Building social capital such as volunteering can be a strong factor that determines mental illness and mental wellbeing

N.B. The numbers correlate to its paired cupcake shown in Appendix A

Upon completion of the five actions and consuming the associated cupcakes, students advance to the next phase of the wellbeing box. The base of the box reveals step-by-step baking instructions, enabling students to create their own wellbeing cupcakes. Not only does baking provide a positive wellbeing experience for the student, which will be further investigated in the next section, it will also enable them to place their self-made cupcakes back into the wellbeing box and pass it on to another student.

The cupcakes are designed to symbolise human wellbeing. The hollow centre of the cupcake, which can have fruits added to it, represents the importance of filling oneself with healthy elements. Indeed, the Week 4 lecture taught us how important nutrition is to wellbeing which is supported by Bonnie et al.'s (2013) experiment which found that the consumption of fruit and vegetables predicts same day positive affect which also continues to affect the following day. Indeed, this is supported by “epidemiological research that has observed that adherence to healthy or mediterranean dietary patterns – high consumption of fruits – is associated with a reduced risk of depression” (Firth et al., 2020). This has informed the ingredients used in the cupcake and prioritises the inclusion of as much fruit as possible. Additionally, the fruit fillings are concealed by a layer of cream, which acts as a metaphor to show that well-being is often invisible; Just as the filling is hidden from view, a person's state of wellbeing may not be immediately apparent from the outside.

Moreover, every aspect of the box has been planned in a way to enhance the student's wellbeing as exemplified by it possessing a colour scheme that is heavily composed of different shades of pink and green as Mbina & Edem (2015) found that “blue surroundings will significantly lower a person's blood pressure..” and that pink can cause individuals to be “relax [and] become calmer”.

Medium of Baking

Baking has been chosen as the medium of the SDA as it provides several wellbeing benefits. Firstly, as it is often done with others, baking promotes social interaction and strengthens relationships with others. In my case, whilst making the SDA, I was baking alongside my sister, and it provided an opportunity to spend time with each other and become closer to each other. This is highly beneficial for me as “the available evidence suggests that high quality relationships characterised by closeness with siblings are related to higher levels of well-being” (Thomas et al., 2017) and I hope this positive dynamic is replicated by the recipients of the wellness box.

2148791

IB3D80

Individual Assignment

Another wellbeing benefit of baking is that it allows individuals to utilise their creativity. There is no set way to make or decorate cupcakes, for example, and individuals are free to use their imagination to bake as they see fit. Indeed, it has been shown that “creativity can increase (subjective) well-being as well. Hence, practically speaking, individuals can improve their subjective well-being by fostering and strengthening their creativity.” (Tan et al., 2021). This shows that using your creativity (through baking) can lead to a higher level of wellbeing.

Finally, baking can enable individuals to enter the flow state, a concept taught to us in the week 2 lecture, which is a mental state in which sense of time is lost. The idea of a flow state was introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1988) whereby engaging in a physical sport or creative piece leads an individual towards a meditative-like state whereby they achieve a sense of fulfilment and contentment. The creative aspect of baking consumes the entire attention of the individual and they lose track of everything else (such as negative thoughts they may have previously had), which ultimately leads to the stability of the mind.

References

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. 1988. The flow experience and its significance for human psychology. *Optimal Experience*, pp.15-35.
- Elavsky, S., McAuley, E., Motl, R.W., Konopack, J.F., Marquez, D.X., Hu, L., Jerome, G.J. and Diener, E. 2005. Physical activity enhances long-term quality of life in older adults: efficacy, esteem, and affective influences. *Annals of behavioral medicine*, 30, pp.138-145.
- Firth, J., Gangwisch, J.E., Borsini, A., Wootton, R.E. and Mayer, E.A., 2020. Food and mood: how do diet and nutrition affect mental wellbeing?. *bmj*, 369.
- Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project. 2008. Final project report – Executive Summary. *Mental Capital through Life*. London: The Government Office for Science
- Leuner, B., Caponiti, J.M. and Gould, E. 2012. Oxytocin stimulates adult neurogenesis even under conditions of stress and elevated glucocorticoids. *Hippocampus*, 22(4), pp.861-868.
- Mbina, A.A. and Edem, E.E. 2015. The role of colours in the health and wellbeing of the built environment in the tropics. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences Vol*, 3(3).
- Student Minds. 2023. Student Minds Research Briefing – February '23. Student Minds. [online]. Available from: https://www.studentminds.org.uk/uploads/3/7/8/4/3784584/student_minds_insight_briefing_feb23.pdf
- Tan, C.Y., Chuah, C.Q., Lee, S.T. and Tan, C.S. 2021. Being creative makes you happier: The positive effect of creativity on subjective well-being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), p.7244.
- Thomas, P.A., Liu, H. and Umberson, D. 2017. Family relationships and well-being. *Innovation in aging*, 1(3)
- White, B.A., Horwath, C.C. and Conner, T.S. 2013. Many apples a day keep the blues away—Daily experiences of negative and positive affect and food consumption in young adults. *British journal of health psychology*, 18(4), pp.782-798.

Appendix

Appendix A – Wellbeing Cupcakes

