

Balance

Participant 5

Yeah, sure! I'm really big on wellbeing, it's about mindfulness, and it's about getting balance in my life. I've learnt the hard way (I guess we all do) that if I feel out of balance that I don't have a good day.

I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

But it's about balance, and when you have people kind of pulling at you, you feel a bit drained, so, I know that I need to shut the door and I actually need "me" time, and I do those introspective activities like reading and things like that. So, I'm very big on okay, I've been out three times this week – as in catching up with people or I've had commitments – tonight I'm going to shut the door and it's just me. So yeah, I'm very big on balance.

It's all about learning how to make a graceful exit, isn't it? Like it's only just got started, and I'm like...what do I say...I've got somewhere else to be? I don't know, it's hard...In the end I find that if I say no at the start, rather than go for a bit, but that's not fair on me either, or them...do you know what I mean? Sometimes, it's like balancing it. But it's not...it doesn't hinder my lifestyle, but I can say the last few times I've been out, it's been more one-on-one with my friends.

Participant 8

I kind of visualise it as a wheel with different segments, and I have to look after all the different segments in order for the wheel to roll. That's the way I visualise it.

my kind of model is balanced, it's all about balance, something to slide behind...

I have a lot going on which I like, maybe I shouldn't be so hard on myself you know, "I can't fit this in as well". It's something that kind of worries me because if I want to work another 20-odd years – which I do want to – I want to make sure I have the stamina because I tend to go like this...my ex-husband used to say to me "Gosh you're all or nothing!" so, all systems go, or I have a day when I just can't get off the couch kind-of-thing, and he said to me "You've got to learn to plod, you've got to

learn to keep in more even..." So that was good advice, I've got to kind of integrate some rest in there, or whatever I need, and as you say, balance

Participant 9

trying to have a balance of everything, so like physical health, eating well, having time to do things that you enjoy. Like hobbies and things like that outside work. Basically, finding a balance between those things.

think the things I mentioned at the start are really important. Cause I find that once something goes out of balance, then you just don't feel like 100%, that kind of thing. So, I think wellbeing has to be a balance of physical, emotional, also intellectual as well...I think that's important.

Participant 10

Having things to do like a job, exercise, keeping busy

Participant 11

With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being

Participant 12

I think I would divide wellbeing into 2 parts one is physically and the other is mentally

I need to balance a good social life and also stay myself and get some work.

I think I'm maybe very straight and simple, I don't like to think in a very complicated way, so people are always telling me "You probably should relax more because you're so hard-working" and I will try to balance myself, and I will feel that emotion, and feel quite energetic.

Challenges to wellbeing

Participant 1

So, when I personally think of wellbeing, I think of it from three dimensions. So, I think of physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, and also a spiritual dimension. So

physical wellbeing I think of just staying physically active, staying physically fit. Mental wellbeing...negative emotion, positive emotion, feelings of connectedness between people.

So, from my experiences on before when this has happened, I did learn quite a bit. The first thing I do, I suppose, is not to hide that something is happening, just acknowledge it, and then with a lot of these relational conflicts and difficulties, I think being patient is also very important, because sometimes I get impatient about how it's going, and then I become too intense at trying to correct the wrong things, the conflict, and then it kind of aggravated the conflict. So, I just have to be a bit more patient, and... just to allow some space between the relationship. And then to be a bit less intense, and to get other people – one a close friend or someone to mediate the relationship – I sometimes find that may help

occasionally, just spontaneously, just having a temporary existential crisis when you're trying to fall asleep.

I definitely think so. Because I realise that if there's, say one long, one big task, one simple big task that takes say 10 hours, and 10 small tasks that take 1 hour each, I'd be a lot more stressed with the 10 smaller tasks that take one hour each, because they use up a lot of my mind space and maybe get enlarged in my mind. So, I agree with you, the feeling of having so many things on your plate and (*unclear*) and step back and see just how many things do you actually have.

Participant 2

I can deal with stress but I don't deal with having to do a lot of things at the same time – that really stresses me out

Yeah, I'm not very good at saying no, I think I like to please people. I definitely find that hard, yeah.

Yeah, but at the same time there's like a desire to not be sometimes so sensitive. Cause it does make it hard, compared to some other people, to care less about certain things and be more confident about certain things, so it's kind of is like a double-edged sword, and sometimes the negative's a bit more obvious to me than the positive.

Participant 3

during semester when Uni starts, I guess I shift more toward getting goals achieved rather than focusing on reducing my stress...if I'm a bit stressed I may as well channel it into something productive

Participant 4

I've really had a bit of a struggle year with my physical health, at the same time as being really busy with doing my Master's and things like that, but also all of the growth and stuff that's come out of the Master's – really fabulous – but then there's been this physical health hasn't been so great. And that's kind of connected because I've been so busy.

So, I think I'm really happy with certain aspects of my wellbeing and then other aspects of my wellbeing, I'm just getting them sorted and getting to the bottom of a few health issues that I've had, and I think that's really going to take it to that next kind of level. Because one part that's really important for my wellbeing is a run, and because I've been sick quite a lot, I haven't been running, so I've missed that aspect. As much as I try to do meditation, it's just not the same.

Yeah, yeah, probably also not dealing with depression and anxiety. So, I've had depression and anxiety in the past and it's really quite stable at the moment. And I'm pretty good at identifying warning signs, and things like that, of when things might not be going so well. And I'm much better at dealing with those warning signs early. So that's probably another aspect of my wellbeing that's really good at the moment.

One of the issues I think I have got to the bottom of it, but I've had to be really tenacious about it because I've got a very slight immune problem. So the immunologists they see people who are super sick, they don't just get herpes on their lip, they get it in their brain, they're really sick people and I get that. But I had to go -- which was really tough -- I had to go, I get that, but I don't want to be okay, I want to feel really good. So I had to be really tough about that and finding a solution. And I went through a desensitization which was the wrong one and now I'm going through a longer desensitization, and I'm really allergic to dust mites which are everywhere, and little things like getting my husband to do the vacuuming, and I just want to do it and get it done I have to go no I can't do that. So, I am trying to be a bit tenacious I guess with that and not letting it slide.

Yeah, I think probably the health thing but also my husband and I are very different. And he's way better than he used to be, but he never gets angry at me. Like if he's frustrated or something he's like white hot fire. And once whatever is stopped

making him angry is done He's fine in about 30 seconds And it really impacts me for a long time, I feel really shaken up by it and it takes me a long time to calm down from things, and if something like that happens Sometimes its him or sometimes it might be a frustration at work, I find it really difficult to let things get back to a normal state, so, that's probably one of my biggest wellbeing challenges, is that if I'm in that really heightened emotional response it sticks to me, and I'd really love for it not to stick. That's probably one of my challenges. And it [unclear] okay, you're fine now I've got to go and have a lie-down. I just have to lie down for a half hour, if I can do that I'm okay, but that's tough when you're at work or other places. And I think there's always this balance between.. I think I've gotten better at not getting into that really...I'm slower to get into that state, but then I still kind of struggle to calm down.

I'm so bad at this! That same manager, cause he was actually very insightful, he bought me a mouse pad that you could slip a picture in, and he printed out a big "NO" and put it in there, so under my mouse is "No" [laughter]

Because he was like "you're just stressing yourself out cause you're saying yes to everything" instead of saying no, and I'm still not good at it, but...

We've just changed offices recently and gone from having too many people in a small office, now we've got heaps of space, and I'm a bit calmer...I've got breathing space

Participant 5

I guess, trying to please too many people at once is a hard one. But I've learnt – the hard way – I've learnt to say, now, no to people. I get a lot of invitations, and I always feel obligated that I need to catch up with this person, and then this person, and then this person, and then I feel like... Sometimes I just want to go home, and I felt like I always have to go off by myself. But now I'm like, No, I need to just be honest and say, "I've had one of those weeks when I need to go home".

The other area that really got me down as well last week, I'm a single mum, and I've got a 22-year old son who's recently moved out of the house, and he was going through something and so, obviously when he calls me, and he's upset, I've been quite concerned. It's been a serious situation...It's his living environment, it hasn't been really a safe environment. So of course, as a mother, I've told him to come home, and he said, "let me see how the next few days pan out", so that's been stressful, and he's one area that I'm constantly worrying about.

Well I can go to a shopping centre, and I need to get out after a while, because I feel like the energy...I don't know if that's the same thing, but I can't be somewhere where there's a lot of people for too long, for that reason.

Participant 6

feel like it's still a bit of a work in progress, like I'm being more 'boundaried' and there's pushback when you're a little bit more assertive, and you're not as available to people. But I know (I'm talking particularly about my mother)

One of the challenges in the past, I have a couple of tricky family members, and that has been very challenging to my wellbeing, and I see what's happening now...well, my mother for example, and sadly she's losing some cognitive ability and she's becoming crankier and I need to be very boundaried with her, but very nice and kind, but it's really testing, but I know that if I'm not boundaried my wellbeing's going to be compromised. And I'm not willing for that to happen again.

Participant 7

In my ability, or not, to be there for others. Like if I'm burning out, and I'm not feeling great, I find it really difficult to listen to people. If people start talking about something and I think "No, overload, can't do this". I've been getting burnt out with the work situation, because there's been difficulties, and I've approached about a change, and I was told a change would happen, and it hasn't, and the consequences of that is I've been burning out. My health is ailing, but I got sick about 20 years ago, I got quite sick and became immuno-compromised, and it was just from doing too much, you know. And I have been seeing some shades of that again...my memory's getting affected, I develop skin conditions

because at work, it's just silly the way I'm moving around, and after people, and I think "This is crazy, you shouldn't be moving around like this, at this time of life, you had a plan for your retirement, because I'm on the age pension now, and it was to sort of ease into retirement, not to be running around like I am as an AIN." Much as I love, I love the residents, I love that work with them, the contact with them. Because I tend to move, I'm not a slow mover, I'm a bit brisk, and I have to be going down the corridors, back and forward, back and forward, I think, slow down. You know, sometimes you're breaking into a run, and I'm thinking, don't do that. Who do you see doing that? But it's like I don't know how to slow down

And I started to think back and wondered how much of that I did with my husband, there was stuff I'd feel sometimes, I didn't know what the hell it was, or where it was coming from, it didn't feel like me, but I'd give it expression because I couldn't not. It'd be something really deep. And it wasn't until later on reflection I thought I wonder how much of that stuff I mixed up. So I'd always work on myself as a way of working on the relationship, but it's been easier being alone, not financially, but that's easier to cope with too. Because I don't feel I'm carrying other people's stuff.

Participant 8

My lack of exercise would be affecting my health. Cause I'm basically a sedentary person, I'm happy to sit and read or whatever, but I know it's not good for me...gosh I remember one time, I sat at my desk here, cause I have this beautiful little office that my husband made me, and one time I sat here for like nine hours straight, and my back just went into spasms, so I make myself get up and down now every hour. But it really annoys me that I'm not more active.

I've got a treadmill here, I've got a rowing machine, I'd like to take up swimming (I think I'll get up early tomorrow and go to the pool) but it doesn't really happen. I'm really annoyed with myself for not having the discipline to that, because I have discipline in a lot of other areas, but I can't well I choose not to...and the ironic thing is I really enjoy it when I get there! When I go dancing I love it, but getting there is just...So that's probably the part of my wheel or my pie that's least attended to at the moment, and poses the most challenge for me, you know since this age...you put on weight and your body changes and I really [*unclear* laughter] and I get that it changes, and that's okay, but I don't want to be like I was when I was 20, I was too skinny...that's the irony I actually feel healthier now than I ever was, so I want to maintain what I seem to be doing, but this exercise...my diet has improved a lot, so I'm watching a lot what I eat and trying to cut down on sugar which is a bit tricky but I'm trying...but with exercise I can't seem to bring that together quite so well, so I find that a real challenge, a real challenge...

Participant 9

because I'm doing a Master's thesis at the moment, so the stress levels are always up and down. Yeah, but what I'm thinking of (because I teach piano as well) so what I'm thinking is cutting down on teaching next year, to give more time to my thesis. And also, hopefully that will give me more time for myself to be able to do things that I want to do, and not feel like I'm really stressed out and having to manage my time all the time – that kind of thing.

So, I think I want to get more on the positive side, like not having to plan so much all the time would be nice. Cause it's in the city, and what I do is mainly work at home.

So, I want to have more time for myself so I don't have to plan as much, and be so rigorous about it, cause that can also be stressful in a way.

Participant 10

Oh yeah, might feel a bit isolated maybe

Participant 11

unfortunately I got some bronchial infection during the Christmas holidays So I would really like to improve that. Just generally my overall health I would like to improve. I've also had an issue of falling out with my mother, Which is a very precarious relationship, So, I would like to restore myself through that. And just the chronic pain issues and general mood are things that I just continue working on, I would say at the moment it's about me getting over this lurgy, nd being able to accept that certain individuals are just the way they are, and that's not going to alter my life.

Yes and that way it is sustainable because the Crash and Burn... If I just jump in now, I end up having flare ups. And I'd be in bed for a week or two. So I've learnt that the principles I applied when I was teaching I need to apply those to myself

Participant 12

I think I'm personally a very dedicated person, if I'm allocated or I want to do something, I want to do it well, and maybe a little bit of perfectionism as well. So sometimes I can't take on more things, but I maybe want to help my friends, or family, or my colleagues, but I still will do it, but it's in a way that I maybe have to sacrifice my sleeping time, or I forget eating sometimes, so that's kind of the challenge for me.

Connecting with nature

And I still try and, even if I'm not running, I take the long way walking and walk through the park, or something. So, [the city's] got great parks, and so I always try and – every morning – walk through parkland. Whether it's walking to work or running. I was thinking "I'm going to start running in the next couple of weeks, and I

had to run a few errands in the city, and I'll walk through the parks" and it's going to take me an hour longer, but for me, it's being alone, out in nature...So, that's really important, and we have beautiful parks, and I live quite near the [public gardens] and it's just lovely. And when I run, I often go up to the [creek] and that's wonderful, so...pretty lucky.

so if I'm walking through a park – and now I just kind of do it anyway – and it'll be like 'walking the streets' or 'being on public transport' or 'taking a break from work' and it will have one for different things. And they're usually short, less than ten minutes long, and I like them because they're very focused on where you're at, right at that moment. Um, I'd like to get better at going into a state of mindfulness, that is deliberate.

you can be mindful wherever you're at, and I find that really comforting to have that, even available, as well. So, if I'm finding it hard to deal with an environment, then I can just take eight minutes, and it's out and I go "right, okay". I think it's been really useful, like with the park, even when I'm not listening to the app, I'm still looking up at the trees, and being mindful...

Participant 5

I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

So often we'll have a chat and a walk so your mental health – chatting, and you can vent as well – and you have your exercise and then you come back, and that's a really big one for me

If I don't get vitamin D I feel awful. So this weekend with the beautiful weather and daylight saving I was on Cloud 9, but I had a bad night's sleep and then, today was one of those days when I didn't get out to go for a walk – which is rare – and also I came home to get some news from my dad that our neighbour we've known for years is pretty much dying, so I kind of feel sad about that. And I've also been trying to organise my parents' passports and that took my time today, so I feel like today's one of those days where I haven't given to myself. But that's very rare, I'm generally very balanced and more energetic, and so, I'm sorry, you probably haven't got the best version of me...

Oh, 100%. I'm glad you mentioned that. I've got a creek trail behind me and I'll go into the trees. I always go to my trees. And another one is I'll try and go out with my friends and do a hike, sometimes we'll drive up to the bush, so, that's a really big one. And I forgot to mention the other important thing is eating well and looking after myself that way – I also feel amazing. From a health point of view, I've managed in the last 12 months to lose a stone, and so that's really helpful with my health and balance... So I'm just trying to maintain and keep that up. So yeah, it's about healthy eating as well.

But I do more mindfulness, rather than meditating. Like, I'll go out and notice the tree – I'll actually touch the tree.

Participant 6

I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day.

Participant 7

Yes, I do a lot of things with myself, just by myself. Even go walking and things, you know. And I do meditations when I'm near nature. I learned through Ian White of the flower essences to say a prayer when you're out there and thank the angel of the place, you know, bless the spirits of earth, fire, water, air and it's amazing

Participant 8

Whether it be reading, or I only read non-fiction, so reading something that takes care of the growth-personal development, to going for a walk, or doing my money (I have a budget that I use), through to making sure that I talk to the family making sure I'm staying connected with family and messaging friends, so...I don't know, my kind of model is balanced, it's all about balance, something to slide behind... I was so busy last year I slacked off on having coffees with friends and let that slide a little lower, but in general I am aware of doing a little bit every day with each of those segments, it all kind of ticking along, rather than if I focus solely on one segment, then one segment is completely gone to hell

and I like to have time to think...I like to just sit and watch nature outside, and watch the clouds going by...

I've gone to a couple of Buddhist meetings and it's always been on my list to learn how to do it, but I would say my kind of form of it would be walking...walking in nature, or sitting in nature but it has to be in nature, it doesn't work in a room or wherever, it has to be outside in nature, definitely.

And they opened a new track through the bush, and it's just lovely to walk through and I just get lost in there, and looking at the way the leaves move on the trees and so yeah, I don't know if that's a form of meditation, but it works for me...

Participant 11

And will be doing a major thesis, so my aspirations are to do a PhD. And I think that's something for me that it feels a little bit like a flight of fancy, But I think, no, that's actually going to help improve my well-being. And I suppose it comes down to that meaningfulness, but it's more that I would like to contribute to improving our environment, because I very much believe in sustainability And looking at what they call agri-ecological farm processes. So, looking at farms as an ecology not just a monoculture Like having a paddock with black cows treating it as a system, which it really is.

but I guess my form of meditation is to eat a go sit in the garden and watch what's going on there, Or just to go sit on the beach and watch. And I'll be mindful of my breathing.

So I prefer to watch nature go past and that's how I meditate. Technically it's not meditation...

Yeah you know that Forest bathing that they talk about in Japan...so to me, Just being in nature and being quiet and observant.

Daily wellbeing practices

Participant 1

in terms of physical wellbeing I do some exercises before I go to sleep, and then for spiritual wellbeing, I usually do prayer before I go to sleep, and to read the Bible – I find that relaxing a lot of the times. I catch up with a mentor every week, and we read

the Bible together which is very good for my spiritual wellbeing and he's also a very close confidante, I'm very comfortable around him. So, every week I bring up something that's been happening in my life and I share that with him and it comforts me a lot. I'm very happy that I have all these connections where I can (*unclear*) to confide in each other and to support my wellbeing. I'm very happy with that.

I'm wondering if the speaking prayer is a kind of meditation?

If so, then that's something I do daily, and it's something that I do occasionally during the day as well. I do find it calming before going to sleep. It's also alone time. I usually close my eyes and just focus on my internal thoughts. And I do find that relaxing for myself.

So, some strategies for emotional regulation I've learnt on the way, but I recently, over the past year, I began to tend to it more actively. When I realised that a particular negative emotion like anger or sadness or stress is building up within myself, I usually delay it. I delay it by telling myself I shouldn't make a judgement right now, that I'm stressed or angry... I should delay this feeling until later and see if they're still present, then I will tend to it. A lot of times, I think, when stress and anger or sadness, grief builds up, it's in the spur of the moment and it can really make you engrossed in that, so what I usually do is take a bit of time to – not to ignore it – but to test whether it's permanent so I try not to think about it for a few hours. If it happens during the day I'll just delay it to the afternoon, or at night in the evening. If it's still present I will tend to it and see "why do I feel this way" "do I have any justification for feeling this way". If there's something that's actually bad has happened. And I try to... if it's work related stress I try to break it down to tasks, I break it down to a small task and I stand back a bit and analyse those tasks, and estimate how long they would take, and usually I find out that it's something enlarged in my mind... in reality it wouldn't actually take that much time for that, and if I use my time while I can, I comfortably finish the task. That usually helps with task-related stresses. If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

Yes, spontaneous and do things as they come up, and I think having a routine or a plan, I feel very restricted by that. I probably won't establish a concrete plan or routine but there are some things that I do, daily, and regularly such as prayer, and such as exercise. I think knowing that I score highly on this trait will probably alert me

to take care of myself more, to recognise that I am more sensitive to stimuli and things than other people and this will help me to be more mindful of how I'm feeling

Participant 2

I'd say every day I try to do something...it's exercise or coming home and reading a book to kind of just escape a bit of work and everything else. So, I'd say every day I try to do something.

Participant 4

probably daily. It probably seems like a really weird thing, so, my husband and I – I'm probably more of an early riser, and go to bed earlier, and he's a little bit the other way. And so he sometimes goes to bed early because he cycles, so he'll get up really early and go for a bike ride, but generally he stays up a bit later, he needs a little bit less sleep than I do, as well, so there's a period of time when I go to bed, but I'm not sleeping, but I'll listen to an audiobook, usually something that is completely outside of work and everything. And in particular if I've got a lot on, I'll choose a book – I'll often use science-fiction, because it's SO far outside and I get absorbed in a different universe, and that can be a really nice way to just switch my brain off, and have alone time, just before I go to sleep. And I find that really beneficial. And because it's an audiobook it takes away the eye....

Participant 5

Every day. At the end of the day, after dinner, if I haven't gone for a walk with daylight saving, I'll put the music on as a way to just unwind. And every day I will go for a walk. So, yeah, that's my balance.

Participant 6

I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day.

And so, what I've realised through Bessel van der Kolk's work and he's talking about movement, I think yoga and walking is incredibly important for me. So I really want

to walk every day...I mean if I'm busy and I don't get to walk one day I can survive, but my days with walking and yoga are so much better.

Participant 7

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself. And the way I eat...I make sure I eat highly nutritious food and I'll take the time to prepare for myself, you know. But I'm not making it less than I would, making the meal less than I would for somebody else. Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

Participant 9

So, I like to embroider and crochet and knit and stuff like that, and I find that really helps me balancing against all the reading that I have to do for the thesis. So, I try to make sure that I can [unclear] every night, so maybe 10pm or something, I shut down the computer and then just like wind down, go to bed, and then I just pick whatever I feel like doing, so whether it's crochet or embroidery or whatever. And then, maybe do that for half an hour to forty-five minutes, and then go to sleep. I do try to devote that kind of time on weekdays, then on weekends I like to spend time with my partner. So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing. So, I guess that helps to balance out from the work and stuff. And what I do as well – I try to do this every night as well or when I have free time – I try to make a to-do list for the next day, so that helps me because I wake up and I know what I'm going to do, as opposed to waking up and I have to think about what to do.

Yeah, so when I crochet at night, when I do all the craft stuff at night I just kind of give myself that hour to just not think about anything. And then on the weekends as well, I'll just spend time with my partner cause he has a huge Lego collection, so he likes to make stuff with his Lego and I'll sit with him and just do some work, and other times I'll just help him with the Lego and stuff. So, I think that's also pretty nice because I don't have to be anywhere... So, basically at nights, and on the weekends.

Participant 10

Just exercise once a day, on the bike, go for a ride if I've got time

Participant 11

I'm very fortunate because I live out in the country, and I have four dogs -- I am dog-centric -- So to nurture the relationships with my dogs I spend lots of time with them train them. It probably sounds wanky, but I dehydrate their treats, I make sure they have a healthy diet.

So, Doing those things and just keeping in touch with what they're doing, Watching what they're doing on Facebook, and commenting, it's worth putting myself out sometimes. It's very difficult going from having just one child to having a whole entire family [laughter]. So, it's an ongoing pursuit, let's put it that way, so I guess, I do all those but I personally gain much more from all of them, my family and my dogs, than they I feel like I could give them, in return. So yeah I suppose that's how I do it, but I just accepting them and embracing them...

Participant 12

I talk with my family almost every day or at least 4-5 days a week. So that's quite important for me because I'm also their only child and I'm overseas and they're worried about me. So they ask "Are you okay? What have you done today? Any pictures and stuff?" Also I guess, the friendship is quite important, so I would like to hang out with friends, I spend some time with them and know how they go. So sometimes I send messages to my friends And say "how was your uni? how was your holiday?" Because those people are quite important to me, so I send a message every now and then.

Dimensions to work on

Participant 1

easier to maintain physical wellbeing earlier in the semester when there isn't quite as much work, but especially when you get to the end, you stay up sometimes a bit later, and then you're too tired to exercise or leave the house sometimes,

although I feel very connected to people – it can also be a point of vulnerability for me, I think, 'cause I get a lot of my personal meaning and satisfaction through my relationships. And if any of them goes wrong, I get devastated, and it has a very large impact on my wellbeing. And I think that, although it is important and I'm very glad I have so many connections, I also wish to be a bit more... assured in those relationships, and be a bit more....how to put it...although I'm comfortable, independent, on my own, I hope that I can also...how to put it (*chuckle*)...so I can be more comfortable if they don't work out.

So, from my experiences on before when this has happened, I did learn quite a bit. The first thing I do, I suppose, is not to hide that something is happening, just acknowledge it, and then with a lot of these relational conflicts and difficulties, I think being patient is also very important, because sometimes I get impatient about how it's going, and then I become too intense at trying to correct the wrong things, the conflict, and then it kind of aggravated the conflict. So, I just have to be a bit more patient, and... just to allow some space between the relationship. And then to be a bit less intense, and to get other people – one a close friend or someone to mediate the relationship – I sometimes find that may help

self-compassion...not really, after hearing about it that's something I'm probably very bad at. Although I'm usually non-judgemental to myself, but I'm not compassionate, so to speak. I think compassion is a positive thing, and non-judgemental is neutral, I think. I'm just neutral to myself. I think, something I find challenging with self-compassion is, every time I try to tell myself "you've been through some very difficult things" I just think of other people have, there are many people in this world currently and in the past who have many more difficult things, and I sometimes feel just a hint guilty if I tell myself that...try to tell myself that I've been through a lot and I should rest. Yep, so I think self-compassion is difficult for me because I see so many people who are *not* me who are far worse than myself, so I don't think I'm in a position to let myself off, basically. Yeah. So, I really agree on what you said before, it's easier to have compassion for other people than for myself.

Participant 2

that's kind of like ongoing things that are always happening to improve my wellbeing

Um, probably not as much as other things, no. [Self-compassion is] something I probably should do more of, yeah, but it's not like the top thing I do.

Yeah I do meditate, not every day, like that's one of my goals to be disciplined and do it every day, but I tend to do it more when I'm stressed or anxious. But, the idea is that I want to do it every day.

Yeah, I'm not very good at saying no, I think I like to please people. I definitely find that hard, yeah.

Participant 3

I think for me it's just being as relaxed as possible, no stress...Not having a lot of tasks to do...that's mentally. Physically, I don't know...I think I just take my physical wellbeing for granted at the moment. So, mentally is my main focus, I guess. Being the least stressed as possible.

Participant 4

I think I'm really happy with certain aspects of my wellbeing and then other aspects of my wellbeing, I'm just getting them sorted and getting to the bottom of a few health issues that I've had, and I think that's really going to take it to that next kind of level. Because one part that's really important for my wellbeing is a run, and because I've been sick quite a lot, I haven't been running, so I've missed that aspect. As much as I try to do meditation, it's just not the same.

[Self-compassion] That's been my...I write a weekly blog and send it to friends and they will attest that I have every couple of months I'll come back to self-compassion. It's something that I have struggled with but I think that I'm getting better at, and I think the more you dig in to self-compassion around it being...and there's different aspects...but it's not just about accepting and going "yeah, whatever's" but it's about "well I can be compassionate" that's where I am at the moment, but there's also this sense of "How do I deal with this better next time, what can I learn?" and I really love that aspect of it. The other aspect of it that I really like is how would you treat a friend? And I'm probably a very compassionate friend that people go to, if they've got an issue, so I kind of go, "Right, if [my friend] had this problem, what could I do, what could I say" so I find that aspect of self-compassion really good as well.

I'm so bad at this! That same manager, cause he was actually very insightful, he bought me a mouse pad that you could slip a picture in, and he printed out a big "NO" and put it in there, so under my mouse is "No" [laughter]. Because he was like "you're just stressing yourself out cause you're saying yes to everything" instead of saying no, and I'm still not good at it, but...

Participant 5

Probably...it's funny, I went on holiday two weeks ago and since then, my eating's been out of whack. So, I haven't been eating as well as I have been. So, I know that's affected my energy levels, and so that's probably the area I need to go back and improve on. But, generally, yeah... Oh, I just thought of one thing, where I probably wouldn't mind getting a relationship...what's the word...You know how, the relationships we have around us, like friends and family, so I've got wonderful family, I've got wonderful friends, but I guess it'd be nice to have a partner. So, I guess I feel

in one way, that's an area that I need to probably work on. Maybe to find someone to share with. So that's an area of wellbeing I think, that's been neglected.

Oh massively important! And I don't practice it [self-compassion] as much as I should. That's one area that I really do need to work on, because I think a lot of us can be hard on ourselves. But that's one area I probably need to work on, definitely.

Participant 6

I've got quite a few resources, and digital cluttering, and if I could have a Genie say "you can have a magic wish what would you like?" Like the fairies to come in and do it all but that's not gonna happen, so I've got to do it and that's okay. And I feel like my mind is a beautiful garden...but it's got quite a few weeds in it at the moment. And that's kind of the clutter. And in the scheme of things I'm not a hoarder, it's not out of control, but I'd like to pull out the weeds and take care of my beautiful garden...I like that metaphor.

Participant 8

I think the area I'm focusing on this year is probably health...

Generally speaking, it would be probably the work-career segment is the predominant overarching thing I want to focus on...a lot of my actions, my thoughts...so that's really the predominant one...to start a career

My lack of exercise would be affecting my health

Participant 9

Yeah, so it helps with muscle toning and stuff and I wanted to try it at the start of the year, so finally I got around to it, and I signed up in August, and I started going. So, I think that's been a good improvement, cause before I think I was probably working too much and not getting enough physical exercise. So, what I'm doing at the moment is only going once or twice a week, but my goal is to get it up to maybe three or four times a week if I can. So that is part of my plan for balancing everything out.

Participant 11

Always like to improve. Yeah unfortunately I got some bronchial infection during the Christmas holidays So I would really like to improve that. Just generally my overall

health I would like to improve. I've also had an issue of falling out with my mother, Which is a very precarious relationship, So, I would like to restore myself through that. And just the chronic pain issues and general mood are things that I just continue working on, I would say at the moment it's about me getting over this lurgy, nd being able to accept that certain individuals are just the way they are, and that's not going to alter my life.

I will always contemplate what I'm wanting to achieve and what that looks like so visibly what does that look like. Like one of the things I'm looking at, at the moment is I used to swim to kilometres a day But I haven't been able to swim at all due to physical limitations For the past six years, and I've decided recently that I'd like to go swimming so by next summer I'd like to be able to go to the beach and do some well not laps but do some surf swimming So how does that look like and I visualise myself doing it And then breaking it down into chunks like where do I need to start? First thing I need to do is go to the pool to a safe environment where I can do that, Building up. So it's just that being realistic And having the overall goal And the steps along the way

Participant 12

I think maybe social life. It's really hard for me because in the past I was not aware of this, but only recently, is where we are in a large group of students and sometimes I find I don't make a judgement very quick, I don't like to think negatively. So I always think "Even if I think this person is not good, this person is annoying, but I think there is always something that they have good, like they're really good at asking questions, so there's not much negative things, and so, sometimes I think I'm not critical enough to make a judgement and opinion. It's good and it's bad. Sometimes I think it's good that I always think positively and optimistically, but sometimes I think that I'm not really in the world, I'm in my own world.

I think it is more self-awareness. Let's say, how many times, when I was in an emotional situation, I can control my mind or control my emotion. This time, I think oh yeah, I do better than before. But for health, we have the counting steps, so on the mobile phone, how much steps you have done, how long you have run, that's a good way of tracking my progress.

Emotional self-regulation

Participant 1

So, some strategies for emotional regulation I've learnt on the way, but I recently, over the past year, I began to tend to it more actively. When I realised that a

particular negative emotion like anger or sadness or stress is building up within myself, I usually delay it. I delay it by telling myself I shouldn't make a judgement right now, that I'm stressed or angry... I should delay this feeling until later and see if they're still present, then I will tend to it. A lot of times, I think, when stress and anger or sadness, grief builds up, it's in the spur of the moment and it can really make you engrossed in that, so what I usually do is take a bit of time to – not to ignore it – but to test whether it's permanent so I try not to think about it for a few hours. If it happens during the day I'll just delay it to the afternoon, or at night in the evening. If it's still present I will tend to it and see "why do I feel this way" "do I have any justification for feeling this way". If there's something that's actually bad has happened. And I try to... if it's work related stress I try to break it down to tasks, I break it down to a small task and I stand back a bit and analyse those tasks, and estimate how long they would take, and usually I find out that it's something enlarged in my mind... in reality it wouldn't actually take that much time for that, and if I use my time while I can, I comfortably finish the task. That usually helps with task-related stresses. If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

Participant 2

Okay yeah, so, having that self-talk like "this will pass" and "it's just a stressful time" or "it'll be okay". Everyone has these moments, and it's not catastrophising it like I used to, but just being a bit more comfortable sitting with it and thinking it'll pass and it'll work out.

Participant 3

I try, but I feel like...my temper is very, very short. I just react, without being able to step back. I mean, I try...after I let it out then I can just reign myself in a bit, and think about the situation logically, but in the moment it's a bit hard...I'm working on it.

Participant 4

Yeah, yeah. A few years ago, I had a manager that was really supportive, and he showed me this thing which is $E + R = O$ which is Event + the response gives you the Outcome. And what he said was, 'What we want to get people doing is thinking what's the outcome we want, then think of the response' so we're flipping it, instead of going $E R O$ we're going Event, thinking Outcome, and then what's the response. Choose the response that's going to give you the outcome you want. And I've never

forgotten that and it's really hard, but the more I practice it the better I get at it and even if you're really panicking inside, you can do that cognitive step of "What do I want to happen here" this takes it out of that hyper...and having that equation helpful, it's logical. And I build it now into all my training programs for leaders.

Participant 5

Naturally, I'm a very positive person, and I'm always trying to *(unclear)* and *(unclear)* be a happy person, so even if I'm tired or grumpy, I'll try and not let it sort of... I'll try not to snap at people. But today I'm just feeling a bit – you know, the grey weather, the rain... But generally, I'm actually really good, I feel really blessed.

Participant 7

I do that a lot, I do that a lot. And I've had people just absolutely gobsmacked at my self-control. I can, I can regulate that, and I deal with people individually...if this person's annoying me or if this person's ignoring me, but I turn around and don't have any of that filtered through to the next person I'm talking to. If I'm really tired and I've got the little ones, I avoid having the two of them at the same time when I'm really tired, because I know I'm going to be a bit more irritated if they get too loud, and one of them is ADD...he is SO sensitive, that kid

Participant 8

Definitely, and this one I love doing it, I love practising it...I love feeling empowered to choose the way that I respond...especially patience, cause I used to be very impatient, and the universe gave me an autistic child, I'm sure, to develop my patience, and that did and I like kind of continuing that...and just also staying calm. I really admire people who stay calm, so I really have tried to...am trying (work in progress) really trying to enact that and like, okay let's just calm the hell down [laughter]. So that's a good process, and I actually enjoy the challenge of trying to get better at it.

I think definitely in relation to relationships it's definitely improved it. It's ironic, because my ex-husband, he was the calm one and I was kind of the [gesturing] and now my new husband, he's the [gesturing] one, and I'm the calm one! I'm the one who is always the calm voice of reason when he's jumping up and down, and I'm going "Well let's just think about this...what we're going to do about it..." So definitely in relationships, and also in relation to myself...self-compassion...definitely

in relation to that as well. So I would say definitely it's helped improved my wellbeing, definitely.

Participant 9

I think that's been a big thing this year, like with the break-up...that happened when I was already alone, so my family were all on their ways and stuff, so I think being alone really helped me with that. With the depression and that, it was already helping me to be more aware of my emotions and with the break-up and being alone, I think that reinforced it even more. Also, what I neglected to mention was, with the solitude part, so I actually had a house-mate for a little bit of time, but I asked her to leave because it was too much for me. So, during that period of time as well it helped me to be more...I mean, I was already aware of my emotions but I guess it helped me learn how to express them more. Because normally I'm not the type of person who would be so forthcoming about them, so yeah, I think that helped as well.

Because I used to be more reticent about my emotions. I think in the past I used to suppress my negative emotions, or what I perceived as negative, but I think now I've come to this point in life where I'm more accepting of them. So, if I'm feeling anger or sadness or pain or whatever, I'm more able to come to terms with it, like accept it. Because I think it's like once you accept it, it's easier to move on. So, that's something good I've learnt this year.

Participant 10

Sometimes I think I do, but not much at home really...Maybe when I'm outside with friends or somewhere else...

Participant 11

With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being I know that my well-being or my holistic health is improving When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So there's a lot of positive self-talk

And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the Mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

With my husband, he's absolutely wonderful, and very accepting, and I find if I've been in a lot of emotional or physical pain I can be quite nasty, so it's a lot about me

being mindful about saying what I need to say, or doing what I need to do. And when I do get a little bit cranky, I just step back and say why did I do that, It wasn't about him. And at times I'll just say to him, it wasn't you darling, it's just me. I'm just in a bit of turmoil, I'm going to step outside and... After I come back in I genuinely apologize because he doesn't deserve to be my backlash.

So not only is it important for the relationships but also for my sense of being a good person, I don't like having emotional outbursts. And I don't like seeing pain on the faces of those I love, And I certainly don't want to be the one who causes it. And also, for my chronic health issues I've learnt that it's extremely important for me to keep a nice base line, it's just not worth it.

Participant 12

Yes, I do. I think I'm maybe very straight and simple, I don't like to think in a very complicated way, so people are always telling me "You probably should relax more because you're so hard-working" and I will try to balance myself, and I will feel that emotion, and feel quite energetic.

Extraversion – SPS

Participant 5

trying to please too many people at once is a hard one. But I've learnt – the hard way – I've learnt to say, now, no to people. I get a lot of invitations, and I always feel obligated that I need to catch up with this person, and then this person, and then this person, and then I feel like... Sometimes I just want to go home, and I felt like I always have to go off by myself. But now I'm like, No, I need to just be honest and say, "I've had one of those weeks when I need to go home".

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality

connections. So I know on a neurobiological level how important the dogs are for me and my husband. So for me, I experience a lot of positive emotion, one of my highest strengths is humour, and the second is prudence, so that feels like having one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake – but I've learnt to handle that. Engagement – I feel like I'm in a state of flow quite often – particularly when I'm volunteering. Relationships – I've learned more about that and compassion (I'll talk more about that later), but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care. And I think at my age I'm really becoming more 'boundaried', and I'm excited about the fact that it's like return on investment, in terms of resources and energy and "which walls am I going to put my ladder up against?"

I feel like it's still a bit of a work in progress, like I'm being more 'boundaried' and there's pushback when you're a little bit more assertive, and you're not as available to people. But I know (I'm talking particularly about my 85-year old mother) my mid-life crisis/red sports convertible was 'way too low and just not practical' and I was happy to bring back our maple tree yesterday, from the nursery, with the top off, and my nieces, they loved it. We drive (sun-smart of course) but we drive with the top off. Life's for living you know? Especially my poor sister died from brain cancer, and you think "who knows how long have we got?" We don't know how long we've got. We go to the off-lead park, it's five minutes away, let's put the top down, let's feel the wind in our hair, you know? And I'm aware of the happiness it brings to others.

Participant 7

Researcher: is it difficult for you to balance those two aspects of your personality, because the sensitive part of you needs time alone, but then the more extraverted part of you wants to connect with people, and be with people, is that difficult?

It varies, it depends on the situation at a given time, it depends on the people there. I have been to gatherings sometimes where I've just sparked, and I've gone wow! Where's that coming from

And I thought maybe it depends on whatever the cyclic phase is, but I do love both...connecting with people and spending time on my own. If you said to me "you can only have one or the other" I would take probably the time alone, because I can always step out. Although if it's just one OR the other...I just can't imagine being out there so much, I think I would get really overwhelmed if I did not have that time where I could just turn away. Like at the end of my shift I just have to walk out of the

place, I know I've given everything I've got and I have to go and I will not allow myself to get pulled back. Yeah, so it's a hard one

Important dimensions of wellbeing

Participant 1

I do put a lot of emphasis on my spiritual wellbeing

maybe next is mental wellbeing

I do care a lot about my relational connections between people, a lot more so

Physical wellbeing, relatively, is quite low on my list, but it's important on the list I think.

Participant 2

when you feel like your best self that you know you can be, And that's physically and mentally as well, you just feel like you're your best self, really, yeah.

always try to aim for a better version of ourselves

Participant 3

Feeling the least amount of stress. Yes, I think that's [supportive relationships and friendships] important as well, that would be my maybe number 2 or 3... I mean I don't really like to be around people too much but I have a close group of friends and they really help me get through life, I guess...

Self-acceptance I reckon that would be up near the top, cause if you're hard on yourself all the time then you can never not be stressed, I guess.

Participant 4

Yes, definitely authentic, and I think as well that sense of meaning, you know. Once I was able to find a real sense of meaning in the work that I'm doing, and things like that, was really important as well.

Participant 5

I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

one of the things that make me happy is I have a very fulfilling job that I really enjoy going to. I have a great team, I'm the manager there so I feel like I'm in a very supportive environment, and I'm also supportive in turn of my staff and get a kick out of being a mentor and things like that. That is a great joy. And I feel really balanced with my exercise, and my time out, and things like that, so... I've forgotten the question...

One thing that always gets me going... exercise. Music's a big part of my life too. Me time – making sure that I can shut the door. I have a very busy job, and I have a lot of friends in my circle, so I can tend to be drawn upon a lot when people, you know, need advice and things like that, so I know that if I shut the door as well, or every now and then, that helps me too.

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality connections.

So hope, I have enormous hope and hope is so important; I reassure my friendships especially my female friendships; I feel like when I've got great wellbeing it's energy, focus, I'm much more discerning, things seem clearer, and I have a greater internal locus of control, I feel like I'm much more in control rather than via external things coming in; I respond rather than react; A greater sense of purpose

Participant 7

Oh absolutely! Because what good am I to anybody, if I can't be the best I can be? And that's where I want to be operating from.

Participant 8

Yeah, thank you. That's come about through my pro-activity, of making changes, like I divorced and then I remarried – I met a great guy and I'm very happy, very happy with him, my relationships with my children are still fantastic even though they're 23 and 21, I have a great set of friends, we've been solid for twenty years, I've gone back to university which is a big deal for me, and I'm loving it, I started my own part-time business...

And another thing, I would add to challenge is solitude, the time alone...oh gosh, I value that greatly, but I get interrupted all the time, like I'll read a book and my family come, and cause we're so talkative, they'll come and sit down and have a conversation with me, and I have to say to them "I'm reading a book, I'll talk to you in a minute" because I really value talking to them but I really value my solitude as well. So I'm actually struggling to get enough solitude...so that would be my two challenges at the moment

That's [self-compassion] really high on my radar...it's something I've had to practice and it's a work in progress...

Participant 10

Having things to do like a job, exercise, keeping busy

Yep, having friends

Maybe health, physical health and friends, plenty of friends

Participant 11

having resilience physically it's having resilience emotionally and psychologically.

When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So, there's a lot of positive self-talk

But I would say what provides the most meaning for me is the loving supportive relationships that I have. It's the sharing of life with people who love me and I love

them immensely. So I'd say relationships. Yeah it's the relationships. The rest kind of seems trivial at times [laughter]. They certainly have impact but they don't have as much weight as relationships.

Reference 4 - 2.47% Coverage

And will be doing a major thesis, so my aspirations are to do a PhD. And I think that's something for me that it feels a little bit like a flight of fancy, But I think, no, that's actually going to help improve my well-being. And I suppose it comes down to that meaningfulness, but it's more that I would like to contribute to improving our environment, because I very much believe in sustainability

Participant 12

I think both physical health and mental health are important to me. Both of them are important. So physical health, maybe eating healthy food, and doing exercises every day, that's very important, rather than staying at home and doing nothing. And also, the meaning of life is quite important for me. So I wouldn't spend the whole day without meaning anything, maybe I don't know why I am doing it, I find that's quite important for the things I do, if I really enjoy it I would love to do it. Also, I guess, relationship is very important for me. Family relationships, I talk with my parents, so we always meet online most of the time. And also, how to balance the network of friends, work colleagues, study buddies, yeah.

Knowledge of SPS

Participant 1

I knew I was more sensitive than other people of my age, but I just thought that was just me (*laughter*). So, not really heard of it as a psychological term. I didn't know that before... I thought I'd be above average, but, yep...

I think it's interesting to know that I score highly on this trait, but practically I don't think it would change too much, because I think I already have a good routine in place to take care of myself to regulate how I feel. And just another thing is that I don't think it will help me or change or help me establish a plan, just because I dislike plans, because I just like to be free flowing...

I think knowing that I score highly on this trait will probably alert me to take care of myself more, to recognise that I am more sensitive to stimuli and things than other people and this will help me to be more mindful of how I'm feeling

Participant 2

Yeah, I have heard about it before, just recently in the last year or so, I kind of came across some article.

I think when I read a bit more about it, cause I thought "this sounds a bit like me" I sort of recognised a lot of things and I always thought a lot of things associated with that trait were negative, and I've learnt that there's positive things to it, so that gave me that recognition. Cause I've always gone through life feeling like I'm a bit more sensitive than others, maybe I cry a lot more easily, but then by understanding it I learnt to recognise that it has positive qualities as well that can be good, so I've learnt to accept that about myself a bit more, and be more comfortable with it.

Yeah, cause I've always felt I'm quiet and shy as a child, cause I'm an only child, so I didn't have that kind of supportive relationship, so, I've always thought that was why I've been shy and always wanting to please others, because I didn't have that validation cause I didn't get that from my mum. So to kind of be aware that it's also a personality trait that might be innate, it's kind of interesting.

Mm, yeah, I can definitely relate to that, I wouldn't say I've suffered depression but I do have issues with anxiety, and I think I always have but I never kind of realised them until the last five years or so. I've found personally it's having that awareness, this is the way you are, and you're anxious and that's kind of the way to overcome a lot of issues and improve your wellbeing. So, if I just continued and got stressed and didn't take time to care for myself or do some of that, I think it would, the anxiety and stress would just eat me up. So, I think that's key, is just having that knowledge – at least for me – that knowledge and awareness has been really important. And personally for me, my partner has been really important in that awareness because he's quite insightful and also being, I guess, similar to me but different, has really helped improve my wellbeing. Especially in the last couple of years, so I think that's been really good.

Participant 3

Not a lot, not a lot...just basically the stuff that you sent me. And I think a couple of years ago I came across something about it, and I skim-read some non-legit article or something like that, and I related to it, and I was like yeah, okay...but I didn't really look at it in depth. But it makes a lot a sense

Participant 4

I think it has, I think that going to bed ritual, having that time and now I understand, it kind of happened accidentally because we have different modes of sleep, but now I protect it, if that makes sense? So, it's yeah, definitely, I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

but then I finished, and then I looked it up and he goes, and it's actually helped him understand, which has been really helpful. He talks non-stop...

He's probably an ambivert, but when he's on his own he will talk non-stop too, sometimes I'm like "Who are you talking to?" and he goes "The cat?" [laughter] So, he just verbalises everything, which is great in some ways cause you're never wondering what is he thinking, but also it's like this noisy environment all the time, so he's kind of gone "Oh, you know when I'm all like this, that's kind of maybe frustrating" and I'm like "That's why I put my headphones in" So, it's kind of helped us in our relationship...

Absolutely. I have little things like, I don't like hearing people eat, loud eaters you know [laughter] and then, my husband, if we go to restaurant or something, they have to take the plate away as soon as I finish, and my husband goes "That's your high sensitivity" [laughter] Now it's become a little bit of a...he'll notice something and go "I know what that is!" [laughter]

Participant 5

I think it will...it will help me be more aware and not so hard on myself if I'm not coping in certain environments, cause the fact that you just told me about shopping centres, I just thought that was me....but, sometimes, I just know that I just can't do crowds. I say to my friends "I can't do crowds" or for too long...I'm one of these people that goes in early, if I have to go the Northland, I go in early, do what I need to do, and get out. I love shopping, don't get me wrong, but after a couple of hours, with all the crowds, there's something in me, it just drains me, and I don't get it!

Participant 6

I think it's made a *really* big difference, because for a lot of years my mother caused me a lot of distress, and she'd say "Oh you're too sensitive" and "That didn't happen"

"Oh he didn't mean that" And that caused me a lot of distress because I felt that I was bad, That it was a massive deficit, Like I was a bit mad...

And you know what? That doubt translates into so many other areas...into marking papers as a teacher, into what does that person think of me...what happened in that interaction, I'm not quite sure...I don't trust my own opinion, maybe I should go and ask an expert because surely they would know more than I would because what would I know? Terrible distress over the years...And that's why what you are doing is so important in getting it out there. It's really powerful what you are doing, and when I was reading about HSP and the lady you mentioned...Elaine Aron...and I want to read more and know more about it...I'm just like wow, wow, wow...this makes sense, and to be so much kinder to myself and respectful of myself. If people dare to say you're too sensitive, it's like not have to react, but just take it on board and go "Thank you I know differently and I know better and I know what I'm doing so you're allowed to have your thoughts and I'll have mine...and play on!" So, my wellbeing has improved enormously.

Participant 8

But I'd never heard of it before. I didn't know anything about it.

My favourite relative is my 75-year old aunt and she's just a gun...she still works part time, only just cut down from full time, she's a receptionist at an accounting firm, but I love her energy...she'll come down from Sydney and she'll be up with the birds and she's social, and I really admire a lot of qualities about her, one of the main qualities I admire is her stamina...I always wish that I had that stamina, I struggle to...for instance I have a full day...I'm up at 5 and I get to uni by 7.30 you know I do all the stuff, mornings I'm great, and as the day goes on, by 5-6 o'clock I'm like "I want to go to bed" and then I get crappy when I'm tired, it's like "leave me alone" I can't talk, I don't want to talk, I don't want noise, the solitude is...so maybe I should do a different tactic of going by myself to read a book for half an hour to get through that tired phase...I don't know...and I've always wanted that consistent stamina, like I'll be fine today, I'll go hammer and tongs for three days and then I collapse for a day. So maybe this goes some way to explaining how I function...

Participant 9

I'll definitely be interested in learning about it, and I think depending on what I learn, I'll see how I can apply it to what I'm doing in my life at the moment. Yeah, definitely.

Participant 10

I saw that, yeah. I was pretty surprised.

Participant 11

I haven't had a chance to have a look at the resources yet, but I had a look at the report, and I thought yeah that's pretty interesting and that seems quite appropriate. My son when he was younger, got very interested in personality types, and was reading a lot of psych books on that. And he turned around to me one day and said, "mother you've got a lot of histrionic traits". [laughter]. So it makes sense I guess. I've worked within the mental health sector for a very long time, inpatients and outpatients, I've worked with adolescents and youths, and I went "yeah yeah, But I'm not BPD or anything Liam, I know I'm not, I've already been tested for that." So I don't know if there's any crossover or correlation but I would say that some of the traits are pretty similar?

Participant 12

I think...when I was asking my friends "What do you think of me, what are my strengths my weaknesses? What kind of person do you think I am?" The answer I got was I am a very empathetic person, so the kind of sensitivity trait I realised I have. And also, the people who are surrounding me, they also feel that I am a highly sensitive person. So, sometimes they would let me know certain things, and if they think this is something that you wouldn't assume, and they wouldn't let me know. And also my family I think. They say to me that I'm always really emotional, when I was young, and I'm still quite emotional now. So, I guess it's more understanding and can I feel what other people are feeling, that kind of brings my emotion up.

Low intensity positive emotion

Participant 1

content with my wellbeing, I do feel very comfortable and relaxed. For quite a while recently I'm really pleased about that. Certainly my physical wellbeing could be a bit better, but I have, I think I'm maintaining it quite well. But I think my mental wellbeing and my spiritual wellbeing are very stable, and I'm very content. I'm very happy

Participant 2

Sometimes it's just like to take a bath or something like that to just relax and unwind.

Participant 3

I think for me it's just being as relaxed as possible, no stress...Not having a lot of tasks to do...that's mentally.

Researcher: least amount of stress is important to you – so would that be the most important aspect to you?

Yes, I think so

because I like to do nothing...

Researcher: So, you just like to feel relaxed and calm and peaceful...

Yeah

Participant 4

For me it's less exuberant happiness, and more the kind of contented, softer, and being very comfortable in my space and with myself.

Participant 8

Cause I'm basically a sedentary person, I'm happy to sit and read or whatever,

Participant 9

So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing. So, I guess that helps to balance out from the work and stuff. And what I do as well – I try to do this every night as well or when I have free time – I try to make a to-do list for the next day, so that helps me because I wake up and I know what I'm going to do, as opposed to waking up and I have to think about what to do.

like not having to plan so much all the time would be nice.

So, I want to have more time for myself so I don't have to plan as much, and be so rigorous about it, cause that can also be stressful in a way.

Meaning

Participant 1

So I think having a sense of meaning and purpose is one of the most important things. I remember in my high school years, not having a meaning or purpose, or lacking it, has created a lot of significant distress for me. It caused me to have very depressed mood and be very, very, very down. And I think the importance of having meaning in life is so important to me because it can influence a lot of the actions that I take, for example, I am studying psychology and philosophy because the question of the meaning of and purpose of life is so important and I want to study these two disciplines to have their insights into the question, and I have done lots of reading of philosophical texts on what different philosophers think meaning of life and I'm really into reading literature on those topics. Because I think my family isn't religious, and my conversion and decision to practice Christianity, I think, is also very central to the idea of having a meaning, an overarching meaning. I don't think that I can impose this meaning in Christianity on everyone else, but for my personal search for meaning I think my religion is a satisfactory and adequate provider of meaning and purpose in my life.

Participant 2

Yeah that's [having a sense of meaning] very important to me. Definitely.

Participant 3

I think right now, like having a sense of meaning is lower, because I did honours in neuroscience and I really loved neuroscience, and I wanted to become a researcher and discover new things about the brain, and that was my sense of meaning, and that was so strong, but then I did honours and it killed my passion, so now I'm doing optometry, so I think I found my sense of meaning...so what's more important to me is getting a stable job and living a normal life. Because I do really want a house, and I want a lot of cats, and that's what I'm working towards...I guess that's long-term, but shorter term, I'm wanting to achieve high grades and do well...

Participant 4

Yes, definitely authentic, and I think as well that sense of meaning, you know. Once I was able to find a real sense of meaning in the work that I'm doing, and things like that, was really important as well. So much more on the eudaimonic than the hedonic

Yeah, there was a period in my life where I really struggled with that, I went and saw a career counsellor and she thought learning, design

but I did get to a point where I was like I didn't feel this sense of meaning in it, and I did this very deliberate exercise of writing down a personal meaning statement, why I do what I do, and then that really helped.

because when people have good leadership, they can bring their best selves to work, and do their best work. And that's why I do what I do, and I feel really clear about that, because that's aligned with my meaning statement. So, meaning for me, is really important.

So I think flow is a big part...you know, having that flow, is a big part of what I enjoy about my work, and I can get into that really deep flow state, whether it's writing a capstone, and writing for hours without being interrupted, and I think having a bit of flow, but having meaning as well....So, when I was working in creative industries, I had a lot more flow, but it was all about getting into that flow state and having that, but then when I moved into the work that I do now, I don't quite have as much but I still work hard to find moments within it, and times for it throughout the week. When I've got my headphones on, and getting in, and having the meaning but also making space for flow...

Yeah, although I do find myself sometimes going I want, maybe this is a bit like meditation, but sometimes I'm wanting just pure flow, like, and it's not to do with my work, and that's really nice too, when you're in the creative space and sometimes I'll write for a few hours and it's [unclear], and it's quirky and it's weird, and there's no audience. So, I think there's the synergism but there's also it's nice when they have a separate existence.

Participant 6

one of the things that make me happy is I have a very fulfilling job that I really enjoy going to. I have a great team, I'm the manager there so I feel like I'm in a very supportive environment, and I'm also supportive in turn of my staff and get a kick out of being a mentor and things like that. That is a great joy. And I feel really balanced with my exercise, and my time out, and things like that, so... I've forgotten the question...

Crucial. Crucial, because I'm driven by...yeah, if I don't have meaning in what I do, it doesn't really drive me. So, I feel like I do contribute at work greatly, and I'm valued, so that's amazing, but also I like to try and do a bit of volunteer work and things like that to add and help. I kind of help with charities, and fundraising, as in donating

things like that. I'm very big on social justice and if I can do (*unclear*) I'll do it. Meaning is very important.

Participant 6

Meaning – I feel like I'm privileged to know that after a long time, to knowing what my meaning is – and that's to be able to serve other people

Meaning is enormous to me and I am so thrilled that I have reached this point in my life. Building wellbeing through savouring, and I know it works. Because I've been able to do it over and over with different sets of people, whether it's with a 5-year old preppie, or an 85-year old tricky mother, and everyone in between

Participant 7

I have found in terms of wellbeing, where I'm in a situation where I'm helping others, it's like I move into a different zone. It's beautiful. It's like, even with my work in aged care...which I'm going to finish in a couple of weeks...it's just been really meaningful to me to just be able to look people in the eye and say without saying as much in words...." I see you". You know, and just acknowledge them and their presence, and I find that I get such a beautiful response from them, you know? That's the most meaningful thing to me about work. But I've been a fully accredited massage therapist for so long, that I'm used to focusing in on the client. So that's sort of, in a way very easy for me. But there's no denying that sense of "this is what I'm here for" when I actually am helpful, and I can see the response in people, be it a physical thing if I'm massaging, because I try and do more than the job. I try and soothe their spirit. It's that thing...I don't know what it is...I have this incredible need to nurture.

Oh yeah, yeah! I mean, my spirituality is like...I don't talk about it because I used to have friends who'd say "I can't cope with it, stop it." Because for them it was all about everything tangible. But I have to have meaning. I'm not one of these people who can go out and just work for the sake of the dollar. That's just not...I'd be poorer than I can imagine, if it was just up to that. But I can look for meaning where I am, too. It's such an evolvement process, isn't it?

Participant 8

Oh my gosh, yes, yes, yes! This will be my overarching thing, as in meaning to my life...

and especially in the first year of uni, I'm surrounded by the youth environment, and I'm thinking "oh my God, it's too late for me, it's too late" Gradually I'm starting to come to terms with that..."well wait a minute, I've still got a lot to offer and..." so that's gradually calmed down in my head, but I'm so driven with the idea and the conviction that I can help people and I want to help people. I've got a plan, it's very clear what my plan is, and I want to get in and help people in workplaces,

wellbeing programs for employees, so that kind of thing...so that's my meaning, that gives me my drive...so when I say that's the overarching thing, it is, because it determines in my health...like if you're going to have stamina to get through your studies and develop a career, I need to look after my health,

Participant 9

I feel like maybe I used to ascribe to that more, I used to try and build up meaning for myself, but then over the course of this year, I've come to the realisation that you don't really need a meaning. It's a bit of a weird thing to say, but like you make your own meaning, in the sense that whatever you're doing, make sure you're enjoying it...

Cause, if you're not enjoying your time, then obviously there's not going to be any meaning in your life, that's what I feel, so whatever you're doing like work, or whatever, find things that you like, basically. So just making meaning for yourself.

Participant 10

Yeah, like I go to church once a week, on Sunday, part of life...

Participant 11

I would say that meaningfulness, that purposefulness, used to be - I went through a lot of psychotherapy - Because the workplace incidents I experienced mean that I can no longer perform that role.

But I would say what provides the most meaning for me is the loving supportive relationships that I have. So I've now been married for three years to a lovely man And I have step children and we've now got our first grandchild on the way. So to me now, all else aside, It's the sharing of life with people who love me and I love them immensely. So I'd say relationships. Yeah it's the relationships. The rest kind of seems trivial at times [laughter]. They certainly have impact but they don't have as much weight as relationships.

Well, I returned to, because I was a bit adrift as to what I was going to do, So over the last six years I've done a variety of different courses,

And I suppose it comes down to that meaningfulness, but it's more that I would like to contribute to improving our environment, because I very much believe in sustainability And looking at what they call agri-ecological farm processes. So looking at farms as an ecology not just a monoculture Like having a paddock with black cows treating it as a system, which it really is.

so I'm finally going back to something that I'm passionate about protecting and nurturing the natural environment but it will be my farm and our livestock, so I'm going to be a farmer which is pretty cool!

So I guess it does link into that meaningfulness and it's not just me doing it on my own it's my son and my husband as well which will be really cool I think. I guess that's and to the purposefulness and meaning in life day by day.

Participant 12

And also, the meaning of life is quite important for me. So I wouldn't spend the whole day without meaning anything, maybe I don't know why I am doing it, I find that's quite important for the things I do, if I really enjoy it I would love to do it.

Meditation | Mindfulness

Participant 1

I'm wondering if the speaking prayer is a kind of meditation?

If so, then that's something I do daily, and it's something that I do occasionally during the day as well. I do find it calming before going to sleep. It's also alone time. I usually close my eyes and just focus on my internal thoughts. And I do find that relaxing for myself.

Participant 2

Yeah, I do meditate, not every day, like that's one of my goals to be disciplined and do it every day, but I tend to do it more when I'm stressed or anxious. But the idea is that I want to do it every day.

Participant 3

I have tried in the past, but I'm not very good at it. I guess I do a lot of sitting down or lying down and doing nothing, I guess I'm still thinking, so I'm not really emptying my mind or whatever meditation is...

Participant 4

I think I'm really happy with certain aspects of my wellbeing and then other aspects of my wellbeing, I'm just getting them sorted and getting to the bottom of a few health issues that I've had, and I think that's really going to take it to that next kind of level. Because one part that's really important for my wellbeing is a run, and because I've been sick quite a lot, I haven't been running, so I've missed that aspect. As much as I try to do meditation, it's just not the same.

I don't do it every day, I particularly do it if I'm between audiobooks, or if I know mentally that...I'd like to more of it...I have an app called "Buddhify" and it's 'on the go' mindfulness, so if I'm walking through a park – and now I just kind of do it anyway – and it'll be like 'walking the streets' or 'being on public transport' or 'taking a break from work' and it will have one for different things. And they're usually short, less than ten minutes long, and I like them because they're very focused on where you're at, right at that moment. Um, I'd like to get better at going into a state of mindfulness, that is deliberate. Like, I have a friend who's "I've got to have a sit, I've got to [unclear]" and I'd like to be able to do that, but I feel like for me, what Buddhify does is, it says you don't have to do that, you can be mindful wherever you're at, and I find that really comforting to have that, even available, as well. So, if I'm finding it hard to deal with an environment, then I can just take eight minutes, and it's out and I go "right, okay". I think it's been really useful, like with the park, even when I'm not listening to the app, I'm still looking up at the trees, and being mindful...

Participant 5

Yeah, sure! I'm really big on wellbeing, it's about mindfulness, and it's about getting balance in my life. I've learnt the hard way (I guess we all do) that if I feel out of balance that I don't have a good day.

Last night I went to – would you believe – cat meditation at a rescue cat place. So that was fun.

Yes, I did last, went to a class. But also, I try and do it when I'm stressed, I try and do a bit of an internal meditation. It doesn't take too long, but it's enough...it's a particular exercise that clears your chakras. So, I breathe in, seven deep breaths, to go through all my chakras. So, if I do that exercise for like, a couple of minutes, I find

that's enough to just ground me. But I do more mindfulness, rather than meditating. Like, I'll go out and notice the tree – I'll actually touch the tree.

Participant 7

A meditative discipline is good, mine is tai chi. And I haven't been doing that, but there's no denying the difference in my sense of wellbeing when I do that, and it's very rooted in meditation and that's fairly important too

Participant 8

I've gone to a couple of Buddhist meetings and it's always been on my list to learn how to do it, but I would say my kind of form of it would be walking...walking in nature, or sitting in nature but it has to be in nature, it doesn't work in a room or wherever, it has to be outside in nature, definitely.

And they opened a new track through the bush, and it's just lovely to walk through and I just get lost in there, and looking at the way the leaves move on the trees and so yeah, I don't know if that's a form of meditation, but it works for me...

Participant 10

I just try to have a sleep after a meal or something, like close my eyes and have a nap for a little bit

Participant 11

With my husband, he's absolutely wonderful, and very accepting, and I find if I've been in a lot of emotional or physical pain I can be quite nasty, so it's a lot about me being mindful about saying what I need to say, or doing what I need to do. And when I do get a little bit cranky, I just step back and say why did I do that, It wasn't about him. And at times I'll just say to him, it wasn't you darling, it's just me. I'm just in a bit of turmoil, I'm going to step outside and... After I come back in, I genuinely apologize because he doesn't deserve to be my backlash.

When I was younger, I used to meditate quite regularly But after having my son it wasn't so possible. And then did some mindfulness training with my psychologist So I went to mindfulness classes and I find that that's been quite helpful. There was a period when I was practicing mindfulness two or three times a day. I don't do it so much now, but I guess my form of meditation is to eat a go sit in the garden and watch what's going on there, Or just to go sit on the beach and watch. And I'll be mindful of my breathing. I also see a myotherapist once a week, and when I see her

It's very much about the breathing. So, I find that deep breathing very helpful but to actually meditate for half an hour, I really struggle with that, I can't sit still for long enough. So, I prefer to watch nature go past and that's how I meditate. Technically it's not meditation...

Participant 12

Yeah, I have a friend from China who is practising spiritual, not only at home, but he also goes to India, and when I was doing meditation with him, I was thinking "meditation is probably just you stay there, and you just focus on your mind" and he said "you can meditate any time, even when you're watching TV, or when you're eating" so it's quite different from what I understand. So for me, I guess the message is if you spend time every day, say 15 or 20 minutes every day when you get up or before you sleep, I'm not doing it every day, but I like to make my brain blank, and don't think about anything, just sit there and do nothing, that's a way for me to kind of meditate. I think the program of meditation with some questions that I need to answer after the meditation, which I find is quite fun and important, because those questions I had never considered or never thought about – only when I started typing the answers. So, that program also helped me a lot. I know there are quite a few apps that I have tried to practise meditation, but I would do it this way, but then maybe tomorrow I couldn't do it because I have other things. So inconsistent, but I know I probably should do it.

I think I'm maybe very straight and simple, I don't like to think in a very complicated way, so people are always telling me "You probably should relax more because you're so hard-working" and I will try to balance myself, and I will feel that emotion, and feel quite energetic. Like before I came here, when I was in Australia, I went running every day. In the beginning I could only run 600 meters, at the peak time I ran 10 kms. So, I can feel I'm improving not only my physical health but also mental health. Because at the time when I was running it was kind of a way for me to meditate, thinking not about my study, but about very random stuff, and after that I feel "Wow, I'm so fulfilled".

Mental wellbeing

Participant 1

mental wellbeing, negative emotion, positive emotion, feelings of connectedness between people.

content with my wellbeing, I do feel very comfortable and relaxed.

I'm very content. I'm very happy

Participant 2

when you feel like your best self that you know you can be, And that's physically and mentally as well, you just feel like you're your best self, really, yeah.

in terms of mental wellbeing I try to develop myself in terms of trying to read more and know myself better and things like that

Participant 3

I think for me it's just being as relaxed as possible, no stress...Not having a lot of tasks to do...that's mentally. Physically, I don't know...I think I just take my physical wellbeing for granted at the moment. So, mentally is my main focus, I guess. Being the least stressed as possible.

Participant 4

Yeah, yeah, probably also not dealing with depression and anxiety. So, I've had depression and anxiety in the past and it's really quite stable at the moment. And I'm pretty good at identifying warning signs, and things like that, of when things might not be going so well. And I'm much better at dealing with those warning signs early. So that's probably another aspect of my wellbeing that's really good at the moment.

Because when I did your survey, it felt almost like a bit of a missing link understanding my history of – particularly anxiety I think – because for me, it's a very physical thing as well, my anxiety, and a lot of people go "oh you're ruminating, or you're thinking about things too much" but it's not even that – like, I walk into a room and I'm just, everything is just so there, in my face. So it kind of felt like "oh, this is something I haven't explored" but it's really 'insightful giving' – not sure what the right word is for that, but...

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why.

So I know on a neurobiological level how important the dogs are for me and my husband,

but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care.

Participant 9

think the things I mentioned at the start are really important. Cause I find that once something goes out of balance, then you just don't feel like 100%, that kind of thing. So, I think wellbeing has to be a balance of physical, emotional, also intellectual as well...I think that's important.

And then for Instagram I guess, I'm only on it, like once a week., or even less, and I scroll through my newsfeed but then I find it gets really unenjoyable. Really quickly, and then I just go off it because I've got better things to do. So, I'm finding that's also been good in terms of mental wellbeing, and emotionally as well.

So, I think that was a period in time where self-compassion was literally non-existent. But I'm not really sure how it came about, how I got myself out of it, but I think doing my honours thesis has had quite a big impact in helping me get out of it. Because like, just focusing on the work every day, and kind of distancing yourself from what you're feeling and what you're thinking and stuff...it's more about "I'm going to get this work done, and I'm not going to think about anything else" and I think that really helped. And then, I started to feel more and more happy with myself for getting all this work done, and I think this helped with all the self-compassion and stuff like that. So, this year has been pretty big as well, so I finished my thesis in October 2017, and so the positive feelings were like building up, getting better. And then I went through a break-up in January this year, so that was really tough, but I think it was good because it helped me re-address my relationship with myself and how I wanted to be good to myself. So, now I think it's good, because I've gotten this really good balance, so I think it's like natural...I'm not sure if I'm consciously practicing self-compassion but I think maybe when we get into the flow of things, then it comes naturally.

Participant 11

I ended up having some psychological issues as well So I've had to see a whole heap of neuropsychological Surgeons and Specialists within trauma so psychologists And I've had a lot of time to think about it So for me well-being is having that resilience having resilience Physically it's having resilience emotionally and psychologically.

So there's a lot of positive self-talk

And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional. I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me.

So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

Participant 12

I think I would divide wellbeing into 2 parts one is physically and the other is mentally. Physically involves doing lots of exercise whether it's working or doing sports, to make myself physically fit and healthy, no sickness – that's physical health. And also, the mental health is very important nowadays, because we are struggling with lots of pressures in modern society. It may be pressures from study or from work or social life or relationships, so I would say if I found myself happy then I'm not really mentally tired, or maybe I want to get rid of people, or maybe I don't want to socialise. I think it's not normal I need to balance a good social life and also stay myself and get some work.

I think both physical health and mental health are important to me. Both of them are important. So physical health, maybe eating healthy food, and doing exercises every day, that's very important, rather than staying at home and doing nothing. And also, the meaning of life is quite important for me. So I wouldn't spend the whole day without meaning anything, maybe I don't know why I am doing it, I find that's quite important for the things I do, if I really enjoy it I would love to do it. Also, I guess, relationship is very important for me. Family relationships, I talk with my parents, so we always meet online most of the time. And also, how to balance the network of friends, work colleagues, study buddies, yeah.

Music

Participant 5

Another one that I love is to crank the music up and dance in my lounge room, that's a big one. So, I know that these are the things that make me happy and I'll put it on

Music's a big part of my life too.

Oh 100%. Every day. At the end of the day, after dinner, if I haven't gone for a walk with daylight saving, I'll put the music on as a way to just unwind. And every day I will go for a walk. So, yeah, that's my balance.

Participant 9

But in terms of playing it for my own enjoyment, I try to do it maybe twice or three times a week if I can. Sometimes if I don't feel like crocheting or whatever, cause I'm too tired, and I'm like "Just going to go and play some piano for fun". Yeah, so about two or three times a week.

Optimism

Participant 5

Naturally, I'm a very positive person, and I'm always trying to be a happy person, so even if I'm tired or grumpy, I'll try and not let it sort of... I'll try not to snap at people. But today I'm just feeling a bit – you know, the grey weather, the rain... But generally, I'm actually really good, I feel really blessed.

Participant 6

So hope, I have enormous hope and hope is so important; I reassure my friendships especially my female friendships; I feel like when I've got great wellbeing it's energy, focus, I'm much more discerning, things seem clearer, and I have a greater internal locus of control, I feel like I'm much more in control rather than via external things coming in; VIA strengths; better at boundaries; now I respond rather than react; A greater sense of purpose – I really love Michelle McQuaid's podcasts and really want to learn more about neuroscience neurobiology and I love the idea of sensory modulation

Participant 11

I've never really given much thought to it before but 6 years ago I was involved in some workplace incidents which resulted in some severe injuries And I had surgeries and chronic health issues And because they were quite aggressive incidents I ended up having some psychological issues as well So I've had to see a whole heap of neuropsychological Surgeons and Specialists within trauma so psychologists And I've had a lot of time to think about it So for me well-being is having that resilience having resilience Physically it's having resilience emotionally and psychologically. With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being I know that my well-being or my holistic health is improving When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So there's a lot of positive self talk Actually am when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else. So when I look at my well-being I see that I am a holistic resilient individual, And I invest a lot of time into the relationships that I do have, Relationships that we're having a negative influence on my mood or on my Person I have just eliminated, or cut down to a bare minimum. And I just see those people when I need to. And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the Mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

Participant 12

I think maybe social life. It's really hard for me because in the past I was not aware of this, but only recently, is where we are in a large group of students in Australia and also international, and sometimes I find I don't make a judgement very quick, I don't like to think negatively. So I always think "Even if I think this person is not good, this person is annoying, but I think there is always something that they have good, like they're really good at asking questions, so there's not much negative things, and so, sometimes I think I'm not critical enough to make a judgement and opinion. It's good and it's bad. Sometimes I think it's good that I always think positively and optimistically, but sometimes I think that I'm not really in the world, I'm in my own world.

Past Depression Anxiety

Participant 1

I haven't had an enduring crisis that's negatively impacted my wellbeing for an extended period of time, for quite a while, so I haven't had that recently. But that's something that happened quite frequently last year, but this year I've grown a lot more. Yeah, this year I think I've grown a lot more, I have a lot more methods to maintain some level wellbeing

Participant 2

I think my cup gets full and it's a lot fuller already, then it can like tip over a lot easier than some other people, because I probably have more anxious tendencies and things like that, so that can really precipitate things into some 'not very wellbeing'

Yeah, cause I've always felt I'm quiet and shy as a child, cause I'm an only child, I was very distant from my mother, so I didn't have that kind of supportive relationship, so, I've always thought that was why I've been shy and always wanting to please others, because I didn't have that validation cause I didn't get that from my mum. So to kind of be aware that it's also a personality trait that might be innate, it's kind of interesting.

yeah, I can definitely relate to that, I wouldn't say I've suffered depression but I do have issues with anxiety, and I think I always have but I never kind of realised them until the last five years or so. I've found personally it's having that awareness, this is the way you are, and you're anxious and that's kind of the way to overcome a lot of issues and improve your wellbeing. So, if I just continued and got stressed and didn't take time to care for myself or do some of that, I think it would, the anxiety and stress would just eat me up. So, I think that's key, is just having that knowledge – at least for me – that knowledge and awareness has been really important. And personally for me, my partner has been really important in that awareness because he's quite insightful and he's learning psychology and stuff like that, and also being, I guess, similar to me but different, has really helped improve my wellbeing. Especially in the last couple of years, so I think that's been really good.

Participant 3

In terms of self-acceptance? Well when I was a teenager, it was a bit hard, and it was teenage stuff, and I found body positivity blogs and Instagram accounts and stuff, and I got into feminism and accepting yourself and all that stuff and it really helped.

Participant 4

probably also not dealing with depression and anxiety. So, I've had depression and anxiety in the past and it's really quite stable at the moment. And I'm pretty good at identifying warning signs, and things like that, of when things might not be going so well. And I'm much better at dealing with those warning signs early. So that's probably another aspect of my wellbeing that's really good at the moment.

Because when I did your survey, it felt almost like a bit of a missing link understanding my history of – particularly anxiety I think – because for me, it's a very physical thing as well, my anxiety, and a lot of people go "oh you're ruminating, or you're thinking about things too much" but it's not even that – like, I walk into a room and I'm just, everything is just so there, in my face. So it kind of felt like "oh, this is something I haven't explored" but it's really 'insightful giving' – not sure what the right word is for that, but...

Participant 6

I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why.

And happily, I had good psychological support, really good psychological support. And that's why I really....you know, these things happen to us,

Participant 7

I also come out of a family who are very volatile...my dad, if I kept asking him something and he said "Quiet" and I didn't, I would have something hit my face. If he was eating it could be his fork, it could be whatever...

Participant 8

This will be my overarching thing, as in meaning to my life...when I was eighteen I went to uni but I dropped out because of depression, and then I had children... and I always wanted to go back to university but I wanted to do it for a reason, not just to get the piece of paper, to do it at the right time

Participant 9

I think I used to be way worse, I used to not do it at all. But I'm not sure if it coincides with...cause I went through a period where I had depression and anxiety, for about

two to three years. So, I think that was a period in time where self-compassion was literally non-existent.

Participant 11

So I've never really given much thought to it before but 6 years ago I was involved in some workplace incidents which resulted in some severe injuries And I had surgeries and chronic health issues And because they were quite aggressive incidents I ended up having some psychological issues as well

Perceptions of wellbeing

Participant 1

So, when I personally think of wellbeing, I think of it from three dimensions. So, I think of physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, and also a spiritual dimension. So physical wellbeing I think of just staying physically active, staying physically fit. Mental wellbeing...negative emotion, positive emotion, feelings of connectedness between people.

Participant 2

It's a bit hard to define, but I think it's when you feel like your best self that you know you can be, And that's physically and mentally as well, you just feel like you're your best self, really, yeah.

everyone has a cup, and I think my cup gets full and it's a lot fuller already, then it can like tip over a lot easier than some other people, because I probably have more anxious tendencies and things like that, so that can really precipitate things into some 'not very wellbeing' so yeah, stress would be the main thing, yeah.

Participant 3

I think for me it's just being as relaxed as possible, no stress...Not having a lot of tasks to do...that's mentally. Physically, I don't know...I think I just take my physical wellbeing for granted at the moment. So, mentally is my main focus, I guess. Being the least stressed as possible.

Participant 4

Yeah. It's an interesting one, because probably it's changed over the years. I used to think that wellbeing was like a set thing, it was probably based on what I thought things should be like, but as I've gotten more comfortable with myself I think wellbeing is about how I'm feeling inside myself. And, I think for me, there's a lot of self-acceptance in wellbeing. You know, wellbeing isn't about having lots of friends and going to parties, which is kind of what I thought I had to have, to be happy, but now it's also about sitting with a good book or quietly chatting with friends or stuff like that. For me it's less exuberant happiness, and more the kind of contented, softer, and being very comfortable in my space and with myself.

Participant 5

I'm really big on wellbeing, it's about mindfulness, and it's about getting balance in my life. I've learnt the hard way (I guess we all do) that if I feel out of balance that I don't have a good day. But I'm very good, cause I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend. So often we'll have a chat and a walk so your mental health – chatting, and you can vent as well – and you have your exercise and then you come back, and that's a really big one for me. So, exercise is huge. So, even at home I always go for a walk or even run. Last night I went to – would you believe – cat meditation at a rescue cat place. So that was fun. Another one that I love is to crank the music up and dance in my lounge room, that's a big one. So, I know that these are the things that make me happy and I'll put it on. And also just calling a friend and having a good chat/yak to a friend. But it's about balance, and when you have people kind of pulling at you, you feel a bit drained, so, I know that I need to shut the door and I actually need "me" time, and I do those introspective activities like reading and things like that. So, I'm very big on okay, I've been out three times this week – as in catching up with people or I've had commitments – tonight I'm going to shut the door and it's just me. So yeah, I'm very big on balance.

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and

I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality connections. So for me, I experience a lot of positive emotion, one of my highest strengths is humour, and the second is prudence, so that feels like having one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake – but I've learnt to handle that. Engagement – I feel like I'm in a state of flow quite often – particularly when I'm volunteering. Relationships – I've learned more about that and compassion (I'll talk more about that later), but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past, I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care. And I think at my age I'm really becoming more 'boundaried', and I'm excited about the fact that it's like return on investment, in terms of resources and energy and "which walls am I going to put my ladder up against?"

Participant 7

I look after my body as best I can, like in terms of being discriminatory with the food that I eat. I eat stuff that doesn't have an adverse effect on my system. In terms of my mind, I try and apply the Abe teachings, regularly, and I keep thinking "You're not getting it, because you're not getting the progress you want" and I think I overthink stuff. I really do. Instead of just...I know that's a tricky thing, you know, that you really need to just move out of there and just feel...And that's very important, I have to keep reminding myself, to appreciate, you know...and to look at what's there instead of what isn't.

Participant 8

I kind of visualise it as a wheel with different segments, and I have to look after all the different segments in order for the wheel to roll. That's the way I visualise it.

There's health, physical health, relationships, finances, social life, personal growth/learning, travel, work/career, I think that's probably it.

Participant 10

Having things to do like a job, exercise, keeping busy...

Participant 11

So for me well-being is having that resilience, having resilience physically, it's having resilience emotionally, and psychologically. With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being I know that my well-being or my holistic health is improving When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain

threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So there's a lot of positive self-talk Actually when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else. So when I look at my well-being I see that I am a holistic resilient individual, And I invest a lot of time into the relationships that I do have, Relationships that we're having a negative influence on my mood or on my Person I have just eliminated, or cut down to a bare minimum. And I just see those people when I need to. And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the Mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

Participant 12

I think I would divide wellbeing into 2 parts one is physically and the other is mentally. Physically involves doing lots of exercise whether it's working or doing sports, to make myself physically fit and healthy, no sickness – that's physical health. And also, the mental health is very important nowadays, because we are struggling with lots of pressures in modern society. It may be pressures from study or from work or social life or relationships, so I would say if I found myself happy then I'm not really mentally tired, or maybe I want to get rid of people, or maybe I don't want to socialise. I think it's not normal I need to balance a good social life and also stay myself and get some work.

Personal growth

Participant 1

I haven't had an enduring crisis that's negatively impacted my wellbeing for an extended period of time, for quite a while, so I haven't had that recently. But that's something that happened quite frequently last year, but this year I've grown a lot more. Yeah, this year I think I've grown a lot more, I have a lot more methods to maintain some level wellbeing

Participant 6

And happily, I had good psychological support, really good psychological support. And that's why I really....you know, these things happen to us, and psychotherapist,

he says "It's not what happens to you, it's the constellation of resources that you have around you"

Participant 7

If I think I've said something to somebody despite what I mean, if I feel they've taken it wrongly, I can sense that, and I go oh, they're bothered, they've misinterpreted what I've said. And then it becomes really important for me to approach them, and say I just wanted to clarify that this is what I meant and I'm sorry if you took it any other way or if it came across as harsh. There was once a time I was so proud that there was no way I would apologise, unless I knew that I was in the wrong. Now sorry trips out of my mouth so easily, it's like "I'm sorry, I've upset you, I didn't mean to do that" so I find it really easy to apologise. I don't feel I've got to take back what I've said, but just to apologise for the impact that I've had that was not my intention. Even though sometimes it's got a lot to do with them, you know, so it's not going to hurt me to say I'm sorry.

Participant 8

Whether it be reading, or I only read non-fiction, so reading something that takes care of the growth-personal development, to going for a walk, or doing my money (I have a budget that I use), through to making sure that I talk to the family making sure I'm staying connected with family and messaging friends, so...I don't know, my kind of model is balanced, it's all about balance, something to slide behind... I was so busy last year I slacked off on having coffees with friends and let that slide a little lower, but in general I am aware of doing a little bit every day with each of those segments, it all kind of ticking along, rather than if I focus solely on one segment, then one segment is completely gone to hell

I always wanted to go back to university but I wanted to do it for a reason, not just to get the piece of paper, to do it at the right time...so the boys are older now and I started a business in life coaching, I did a Diploma in life coaching, and I love it! And it's really helped me on a personal level as well with my personal growth...then I wanted to go to uni balanced that, to add on to that...

Physical Wellbeing

Participant 1

Physical wellbeing, relatively, is quite low on my list, but it's important on the list I think.

easier to maintain physical wellbeing earlier in the semester when there isn't quite as much work, but especially when you get to the end, you stay up sometimes a bit later, and then you're too tired to exercise or leave the house sometimes,

Participant 2

when you feel like your best self that you know you can be, And that's physically and mentally as well, you just feel like you're your best self, really, yeah.

improve my wellbeing by exercising and try to eat a healthier way

Participant 3

I think for me it's just being as relaxed as possible, no stress...Not having a lot of tasks to do...that's mentally. Physically, I don't know...I think I just take my physical wellbeing for granted at the moment. So, mentally is my main focus, I guess. Being the least stressed as possible.

Participant 4

I've really had a bit of a struggle year with my physical health, at the same time as being really busy with doing my Master's and things like that, but also all of the growth and stuff that's come out of the Master's – really fabulous – but then there's been this physical health hasn't been so great. And that's kind of connected because I've been so busy.

I think I'm really happy with certain aspects of my wellbeing and then other aspects of my wellbeing, I'm just getting them sorted and getting to the bottom of a few health issues that I've had, and I think that's really going to take it to that next kind of level. Because one part that's really important for my wellbeing is a run, and because I've been sick quite a lot, I haven't been running, so I've missed that aspect. As much as I try to do meditation, it's just not the same.

One of the issues I think I have got to the bottom of it, but I've had to be really tenacious about it because I've got a very slight immune problem. So the immunologists they see people who are super sick, they don't just get herpes on

their lip, they get it in their brain, they're really sick people and I get that. But I had to go -- which was really tough -- I had to go, I get that, but I don't want to be okay, I want to feel really good. So I had to be really tough about that and finding a solution. And I went through a desensitization which was the wrong one and now I'm going through a longer desensitization, and I'm really allergic to dust mites which are everywhere, and little things like getting my husband to do the vacuuming, and I just want to do it and get it done I have to go no I can't do that. So I am trying to be a bit tenacious I guess with that and not letting it slide.

Participant 5

I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

often we'll have a chat and a walk so your mental health – chatting, and you can vent as well – and you have your exercise and then you come back, and that's a really big one for me. So, exercise is huge.

If I don't get vitamin D I feel awful. So this weekend with the beautiful weather and daylight saving I was on Cloud 9, but I had a bad night's sleep and then, today was one of those days when I didn't get out to go for a walk – which is rare – and also I came home to get some news from my dad that our neighbour we've known for years is pretty much dying, so I kind of feel sad about that. And I've also been trying to organise my parents' passports and that took my time today, so I feel like today's one of those days where I haven't given to myself. But that's very rare, I'm generally very balanced and more energetic, and so, I'm sorry, you probably haven't got the best version of me...

One thing that always gets me going... exercise.

Oh, 100%. I'm glad you mentioned that. I've got a creek trail behind me and I'll go into the trees. I always go to my trees. And another one is I'll try and go out with my friends and do a hike, sometimes we'll drive up to the bush, so, that's a really big one. And I forgot to mention the other important thing is eating well and looking after myself that way – I also feel amazing. From a health point of view, I've managed in the last 12 months to lose a stone, and so that's really helpful with my health and balance... So I'm just trying to maintain and keep that up. So yeah, it's about healthy eating as well.

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality connections. So I know on a neurobiological level how important the dogs are for me and my husband. So for me, I experience a lot of positive emotion, one of my highest strengths is humour, and the second is prudence, so that feels like having one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake – but I've learnt to handle that.

Engagement – I feel like I'm in a state of flow quite often – particularly when I'm volunteering. Relationships – I've learned more about that and compassion (I'll talk more about that later), but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care. And I think I'm really becoming more 'boundaried', and I'm excited about the fact that it's like return on investment, in terms of resources and energy and "which walls am I going to put my ladder up against?"

I just know for me – and being HSP and being prone to a little bit of anxiety – it would not be good for my wellbeing and it would not be good for my relationship with my husband, and I'm not prepared to compromise. If I was thirty, I would say "Absolutely yes" but I can benefit so many people – hundreds of people, thousands of people – doing what I'm doing so I'm excited about that. Health – health's very important because when I sit on our cheap couch I get a sore back and I have to go to the physio, so finally we're getting a good couch. Hopefully I won't have to go to the physio, but I know that, and I aim for, and strive for excellent health. I strive for flourishing – not in a perfectionistic way – but I feel excited because I know the pathways and I know what works and what doesn't work. And I'm so grateful for that.

And just quickly on that, I've realised when I'm with my dear friends, You can see the photos on Facebook it really energises me, But like at Christmas I was so fatigued being with my family of origin, and outwardly I was really gracious and all the rest, but on the car drive home from down near Sale, I felt so triggered. And you know what I should have done? I should have got out of the car and just gone for a 5-

minute walk with the dogs. And Bessel van der Kolk says that on 9-11 it was the people running away from, and run to their homes who were safe, because they were able to physically move their bodies and run even though they were traumatised and triggered. But it was the people who were locked into an aeroplane seat that was about to take off, they had all the cortisol racing through their body but they weren't able to move their bodies to dissipate...And I realised I got a bit triggered at my family of origin at Christmas and what I realised would have been good was to pull the car over, go for a little walk with the dogs to get rid of all that unease. Good to know, good to know. And solitude, I agree is regenerative.

Participant 7

In my ability, or not, to be there for others. Like if I'm burning out, and I'm not feeling great, I find it really difficult to listen to people. If people start talking about something and I think "No, overload, can't do this". I've been getting burnt out with the work situation, because there's been difficulties, and I've approached about a change, and I was told a change would happen, and it hasn't, and the consequences of that is I've been burning out. My health is ailing, but I got sick about 20 years ago, I got quite sick and became immuno-compromised, and it was just from doing too much, you know. And I have been seeing some shades of that again...my memory's getting affected, I develop skin conditions

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself. And the way I eat...I make sure I eat highly nutritious food and I'll take the time to prepare for myself, you know. I've had a couple of instances the last few weeks, and I've been preparing the food and I do "Yes, you've got this in here, and that can help you, and look at you go girl! This is your kitchen and you can do whatever you like!" And I think who's this? It's just my younger me going "Wow, look at you now!" But I'm not making it less than I would, making the meal less than I would for somebody else. Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

Participant 8

I think the area I'm focusing on this year is probably health...because I just turned the big 5-0, so this year

Participant 9

trying to have a balance of everything, so like physical health, eating well, having time to do things that you enjoy. Like hobbies and things like that outside work. Basically, finding a balance between those things.

think the things I mentioned at the start are really important. Cause I find that once something goes out of balance, then you just don't feel like 100%, that kind of thing. So, I think wellbeing has to be a balance of physical, emotional, also intellectual as well...I think that's important.

Yeah, so it helps with muscle toning and stuff and I wanted to try it at the start of the year, so finally I got around to it, and I signed up in August, and I started going. So, I think that's been a good improvement, cause before I think I was probably working too much and not getting enough physical exercise. So, what I'm doing at the moment is only going once or twice a week, but my goal is to get it up to maybe three or four times a week if I can. So that is part of my plan for balancing everything out.

So, I think I want to get more on the positive side, like not having to plan so much all the time would be nice. Cause it's in the city, and what I do is mainly work at home. So what I do is take a tram into the city and go to the health club, get changed, and everything. So, I think it's like, at the moment 45 minutes walking to the tram, taking the tram and making sure I get there on time and have time to change. Because if you're late to class they don't let you go in. So, I want to make sure I'm there beforehand. So, I want to have more time for myself so I don't have to plan as much, and be so rigorous about it, cause that can also be stressful in a way.

Participant 10

Just exercise once a day, on the bike, go for a ride if I've got time

Participant 11

I've never really given much thought to it before but 6 years ago I was involved in some workplace incidents which resulted in some severe injuries And I had surgeries and chronic health issues And because they were quite aggressive incidents I ended up having some psychological issues as well So I've had to see a whole heap of neuropsychological Surgeons and Specialists within trauma so psychologists And I've had a lot of time to think about it So for me well-being is having that resilience having resilience Physically it's having resilience emotionally and psychologically. With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being I know that my well-being or my holistic health is improving When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as

reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So there's a lot of positive self-talk Actually when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else. So when I look at my well-being I see that I am a holistic resilient individual, And I invest a lot of time into the relationships that I do have, Relationships that we're having a negative influence on my mood or on my Person I have just eliminated, or cut down to a bare minimum. And I just see those people when I need to. And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the Mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So, I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

I've decided recently That I'd like to go swimming so by next summer I'd like to be able to go to the beach and do some well not laps but Do some surf swimming So how does that look like and I visualise myself doing it And then breaking it down into chunks like where do I need to start? First thing I need to do is go to the pool To a safe environment where I can do that, Building up. So it's just that being realistic And having the overall goal And the steps along the way

Yes and that way it is sustainable because the Crash and Burn... If I just jump in now, I end up having flare ups. And I'd be in bed for a week or two. So I've learnt that the principles I applied when I was teaching I need to apply those to myself

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional. I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me. And everything that my body does, is to protect me. It's here for me so I need to respect it in return. And I do that through a variety of ways just by taking time out by eating well My alcohol intake that sort of my default. If something is too stressful I've got a history of well let's open a bottle of wine tonight. And now it's like that's not healthy for my body, It's not helping it restore or rest it's just taxing it further So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

I'm a gregarious and outgoing person but also a dead set introvert. I'm quite happy to discuss things And I'm open and direct but I find Social interactions exhausting. one on one I'm good But if it's a group I tire very quickly. I'm the kind of person that can live within herself. Like I'm quite happy to go away In the middle of the bush by

myself and camp for a week with one of my dogs, and I'm in bliss. I mean that's Heaven but there's also a danger in that too. I could quite easily become a hermit [laughter]. But yeah, It is something that I've always done ever since I was a child And I find that it refuels me. And provide me with peace but also time for reflection, And introspection like what do I want where am I going.

To me it's very important. In that I want to be able to maintain healthy relationships with loved ones -- I sort of feel like I live on a tightrope, Is there are any stresses at are out of the norm of being too physical or I've been sitting too long. Warm weather is really good for me but if all of a sudden we get a cold snap Or if I have an emotional charge my health deteriorates And it takes a long time to get it back on to that Equilibrium. So not only is it important for the relationships but also for my sense of being a good person, I don't like having emotional outbursts. And I don't like seeing pain on the faces of those I love, And I certainly don't want to be the one who causes it. And also for my chronic health issues I've learnt that it's extremely important for me to keep a nice base line, it's just not worth it.

Participant 12

I think both physical health and mental health are important to me. Both of them are important. So physical health, maybe eating healthy food, and doing exercises every day, that's very important, rather than staying at home and doing nothing. And also, the meaning of life is quite important for me. So I wouldn't spend the whole day without meaning anything, maybe I don't know why I am doing it, I find that's quite important for the things I do, if I really enjoy it I would love to do it. Also, I guess, relationship is very important for me. Family relationships, I talk with my parents, so we always meet online most of the time. And also, how to balance the network of friends, work colleagues, study buddies, yeah.

But for health, we have the counting steps, so on the mobile phone, how much steps you have done, how long you have run, that's a good way of tracking my progress.

I think I'm maybe very straight and simple, I don't like to think in a very complicated way, so people are always telling me "You probably should relax more because you're so hard-working" and I will try to balance myself, and I will feel that emotion, and feel quite energetic. Like before I came here, when I was in Australia, I went running every day. In the beginning I could only run 600 meters, at the peak time I ran 10 kms. So, I can feel I'm improving not only my physical health but also mental health. Because at the time when I was running it was kind of a way for me to meditate, thinking not about my study, but about very random stuff, and after that I feel "Wow, I'm so fulfilled".

Positive perception of SPS

Participant 2

I think when I read a bit more about it, cause I thought "this sounds a bit like me" I sort of recognised a lot of things and I always thought a lot of things associated with that trait were negative, and I've learnt that there's positive things to it, so that gave me that recognition. Cause I've always gone through life feeling like I'm a bit more sensitive than others, maybe I cry a lot more easily, but then by understanding it I learnt to recognise that it has positive qualities as well that can be good, so I've learnt to accept that about myself a bit more, and be more comfortable with it.

Yeah, but at the same time there's like a desire to not be sometimes so sensitive. Cause it does make it hard, compared to some other people, to care less about certain things and be more confident about certain things, so it's kind of is like a double-edged sword, and sometimes the negative's a bit more obvious to me than the positive.

Yeah, yeah. I thought I'd just add as well, because I didn't talk about it...also what has improved my wellbeing, being highly sensitive, is also the awareness of the positive aspects of the trait, so like I'm a scientist you know, and I've realised that my attention to detail and stuff comes from being really sensitive and that can help. It actually can be a differentiating factor from other colleagues, and I guess the perfectionism and stuff can be a good trait, and the other obvious positive trait that I've come to realise is, you've probably found this, that highly sensitive people are more empathetic to other people...

Yeah, so I've seen that as a positive thing as well, so I definitely have always been aware of people's feelings in a room and stuff like that, I guess that intuition, and I've kind of learnt to see that as a good trait, so having that awareness has helped make me a bit more comfortable instead of just looking at it as I'm weak or I'm so sensitive, so yeah, yeah, I just thought I'd mention that as well.

Participant 4

I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

Positive relationships

Participant 1

every week I bring up something that's been happening in my life and I share that with him and it comforts me a lot. I'm very happy that I have all these connections where I can (*unclear*) to confide in each other and to support my wellbeing. I'm very happy with that.

If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

Participant 3

Yes I think that's important as well, that would be my maybe number 2 or 3... I mean I don't really like to be around people too much but I have a close group of friends and they really help me get through life, I guess...

Positive relationships, I guess that's a bit hard to gauge...I guess if you come away from hanging out with your friends and you feel better about yourself, then you know they're satisfying interactions, I guess.

Participant 4

but then I finished, and then I looked it up and he goes, and it's actually helped him understand, which has been really helpful. He talks non-stop...

He's probably an ambivert, but when he's on his own he will talk non-stop too, sometimes I'm like "Who are you talking to?" and he goes "The cat?" [laughter] So, he just verbalises everything, which is great in some ways cause you're never wondering what is he thinking, but also it's like this noisy environment all the time, so he's kind of gone "Oh, you know when I'm all like this, that's kind of maybe frustrating" and I'm like "That's why I put my headphones in" So, it's kind of helped us in our relationship...

Participant 5

I'm one of these people I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

often we'll have a chat and a walk so your mental health – chatting, and you can vent as well – and you have your exercise and then you come back, and that's a really big one for me. So, exercise is huge.

And also just calling a friend and having a good chat/yak to a friend.

I talk with my friends, and get their advice, and then, also sometimes you just want to vent and tell someone what's happened and they'll (*unclear*) and then what I'll do is, I'll have to touch base with my son regularly, and hear from him that he's okay and everything's okay. And once I've heard from him, then I'm okay.

Participant 6

So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality connections.

Like two nights ago I took two of my nieces out for their Christmas present and last night I took another niece out – experiencing together is so wonderful. Other than giving just a physical gift and knowing what is lasting and building relationships is so important – otherwise I wouldn't see them.

Yep. I actually realised I really like solitude and I really like...to be honest I love my husband he's got a very big personality, I've got a very big personality, Lucky we live in a big house I reckon...Sometimes I crave solitude... Just to have some time to sit and read That's one of my intentions for this year is to put time in the schedule to have quiet time just sitting down to read. And it's important because it's kind of regenerative isn't it?

Participant 7

like with friends...I don't have that, although I've got friends that I've had for forty-odd years. I keep very select people in my life, and that's...if they continue to respond and not leave it all up to me to make the contact.

Yes, it is important. I'm one of these people who has often been the helper, and when I've needed help it's been really challenging for me to pick up the phone and ask for help. But the weird thing about that is, when I have been in that situation, I can make 6 calls and not get one answer. And then I sit down and have a cry. And I think "That's okay, you can cry, you can do whatever you like."

Only until I get away and I go and spend time with my kids because we have such open relationships, I've never said to them that there's anything that they couldn't talk about with me. And I've been really open with them about my own life experience, so please if you want to know about something do ask, because I'll find out if I don't have the information. And my kids are just so beautiful! They hear me a lot of the time, you know and that is really valuable to me.

Participant 8

Whether it be reading, or I only read non-fiction, so reading something that takes care of the growth-personal development, to going for a walk, or doing my money (I have a budget that I use), through to making sure that I talk to the family making sure I'm staying connected with family and messaging friends, so...I don't know, my kind of model is balanced, it's all about balance, something to slide behind... I was so busy last year I slacked off on having coffees with friends and let that slide a little lower, but in general I am aware of doing a little bit every day with each of those segments

But I guess with relationships it's a bit trickier, I guess I judge it by the frequency of our interactions. So I'm very big on communicating daily with family, like we sit down and we chat for ages, so that's how I kind of know things are going well with the relationship. I put in the effort, with friends as well, how frequently we have a coffee or chat on the phone, that's probably how I measure it.

I think definitely in relation to relationships it's definitely improved it. It's ironic, because my ex-husband, he was the calm one and I was kind of the [gesturing] and now my new husband, he's the [gesturing] one, and I'm the calm one! I'm the one who is always the calm voice of reason when he's jumping up and down, and I'm going "Well let's just think about this...what we're going to do about it..." So definitely in relationships, and also in relation to myself...self-compassion...definitely in relation to that as well. So I would say definitely it's helped improved my wellbeing, definitely.

Participant 9

I do try to devote that kind of time on weekdays, then on weekends I like to spend time with my partner. So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing. So, I guess that helps to balance out from the work and stuff. And what I do as well – I try to do this every night as well or when I have free time – I try to make a to-do list for the next day, so that helps me because I wake up and I know what I'm going to do, as opposed to waking up and I have to think about what to do.

Participant 10

Maybe about once a week I go out with friends on a weekend like a Saturday, for the whole day, or maybe catch up on Tuesday in the afternoon

Participant 11

Actually when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else.

And I invest a lot of time into the relationships that I do have, Relationships that were having a negative influence on my mood or on my Person I have just eliminated, or cut down to a bare minimum.

But I would say what provides the most meaning for me is the loving supportive relationships that I have. So I've now been married for three years to a lovely man And I have step children and we've now got our first grandchild on the way. So to me now, all else aside, It's the sharing of life with people who love me and I love them immensely. So I'd say relationships. Yeah it's the relationships. The rest kind of seems trivial at times [laughter]. They certainly have impact but they don't have as much weight as relationships.

With my husband, he's absolutely wonderful, and very accepting, and I find if I've been in a lot of emotional or physical pain I can be quite nasty, so it's a lot about me being mindful about saying what I need to say, or doing what I need to do. And when I do get a little bit cranky, I just step back and say why did I do that, It wasn't about him. And at times I'll just say to him, it wasn't you darling, it's just me. I'm just in a bit of turmoil, I'm going to step outside and...After I come back in I genuinely apologize because he doesn't deserve to be my backlash. My son, I've got a 25 year old autistic son who's very high functioning, he lives, we created a bach pad on our property, so he lives there and I see him every day. And I've always found that relationship mutually nourishing so it's really easy, and I get to see him grow and do

things, and I feel like I can help him out at a rough time in his life. with my other kids I don't like to call them step kids, with my other kids when they've needed help I've just been there, it hasn't always been convenient, And there's been times when it's over stretched my health, but just remembering that providing for them is exceptionally important and those relationships. And the time and energy I put into those relationships it's not just about them, It's also about my husband. So, we've created a nice little group, And we go out for dinner once a month, all of us, and we have what we call our family Get together and it's really entertaining. So, Doing those things and just keeping in touch with what they're doing, Watching what they're doing on Facebook, and commenting, it's worth putting myself out sometimes. It's very difficult going from having just one child to having a whole entire family [laughter]. So, it's an ongoing pursuit, let's put it that way, so I guess, I do all those but I personally gain much more from all of them, my family and my dog's, than they I feel like I could give them, in return. So yeah I suppose that's how I do it, but I just accepting them and embracing them...

To me it's very important. In that I want to be able to maintain healthy relationships with loved ones -- I sort of feel like I live on a tightrope, If there are any stresses at are out of the norm of being too physical or I've been sitting too long.

So not only is it important for the relationships but also for my sense of being a good person, I don't like having emotional outbursts. And I don't like seeing pain on the faces of those I love, And I certainly don't want to be the one who causes it. And also for my chronic health issues I've learnt that it's extremely important for me to keep a nice base line, it's just not worth it.

But I didn't say no even though I really really wanted to. And for me, providing that support for him even though he stuffed up -- was more important than staying at home. So it's incidents like that or like going to the in-laws. But I've got better at that, where I say to my husband -- he's got a very large family -- Their Christmas dos can last 12 hours, So I go every second year now, and he goes on the alternate year. And on that year, I'll just hang out with my son we'll go to a restaurant or something.

Even if it's just about what have you been doing? It sounds a bit arrogant but on a deeper more meaningful level that's where my interactions are, rather than having a host of millions and I know nothing about them other than their name.

Participant 12

I think a lot of things like socialising, I can definitely do better. But I kind of lacked that experience when I was very young, most of my time was pushed by my parents to just focus on study, so I have friends but not many. I regard them as friends, we are quite close which I can always find help. But I don't always want to do things in a

group, or do something together, I want sometimes to have my own freedom or maybe my own space. So, from that perspective sometimes it's hard for my friends to know whether I want to join them this time, next time. Because they're always together and then I'm kind of like all this time I will join and next time I don't. So I find it's probably about the middle or above.

I talk with my family almost every day or at least 4-5 days a week. So that's quite important for me because I'm also their only child and I'm overseas and they're worried about me. So they ask "Are you okay? What have you done today? Any pictures and stuff?" Also I guess, the friendship is quite important, so I would like to hang out with friends, I spend some time with them and know how they go. So sometimes I send messages to my friends and say "how was your uni? how was your holiday?" Because those people are quite important to me, so I send a message every now and then.

Saying No

Participant 1

That's something I had to practice to do, I had to practice. At university, I'm involved with a lot of different student clubs, and I have various leadership roles in those clubs, and then it's only very recently, around the past two months that many people tell me "you're such an over-committer, that you say yes to too many things" and I usually start saying (*unclear*), and recently I have been practicing saying "no" a lot more. So, where people say "Oh can you help set up for this event, can you help get some people to help welcome people for this event" I've learnt to say "No, I'm too tired -- I'll go home and just rest" But that's something I definitely have to practice and I'm glad, because, well, you do better work with a sharper knife.

Participant 3

I think I've gotten a lot better at that over the years, before I used to be like "oh, okay" and just sacrifice my alone time for other people, but now it's like "Nah!" And like my friends understand that and they're kind of similar...

Participant 4

I'm so bad at this! That same manager, cause he was actually very insightful, he bought me a mouse pad that you could slip a picture in, and he printed out a big "NO" and put it in there, so under my mouse is "No" [laughter]

I know I was saying a lot of "no" as I was finishing off [studying for degree]

Participant 5

I guess, trying to please too many people at once is a hard one. But I've learnt – the hard way – I've learnt to say, now, no to people. I get a lot of invitations, and I always feel obligated that I need to catch up with this person, and then this person, and then this person, and then I feel like... Sometimes I just want to go home, and I felt like I always have to go off by myself. But now I'm like, No, I need to just be honest and say, "I've had one of those weeks when I need to go home".

because I can't lie, and I didn't want to just say "no I don't feel like it". But one of my close friends, we're in the same boat, and she also feels like me sometimes, where we just said to each other, we made a promise and said, "If you ever don't feel like going out, it's okay to just say I don't feel like going out". So, her and I are great, and so when the other, greater group asks for things, I will just...instead of...I won't lie, but I'll say, "I can't make it that night, sorry". I won't say "it's because I choose to stay home and do nothing", like, if they know I'm at home, rather than going out. What I've learnt is, I actually don't have to explain myself. I always thought I had to explain myself, but I know it's okay to just say "No".

Participant 6

Yep, that's a work in progress but I would say that I'm pretty good at it and I'm much better than I used to be.

Participant 7

I've had one sister I've had to totally let go, because she just used me too much, and I thought, "That's enough" and I expressed it to her a number of times, and she wouldn't change any of the behaviour, and so I said "No I can't" so we haven't spoken for a lot of years.

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself.

Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to

your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

It has been challenging, and I used to, I tried not answering the phone when I could see they're ringing, and then the new secretary said it's far better just to say to me a flat-out "No." So now I pick up the phone and I go "No"

So, with friends who ask me to do stuff or invited me to do things and I can't go, I say look I'm really sorry, but for whatever reason I can't make it. I can never be one of these people who say yes to things and then see...I've had people say to me "Just say yes and then do what you can" I say, "No I don't operate that way." If I say yes, then that means that something really serious is going to have to stop me from getting there, being there. So, if I say no, I mean no, if I'm not sure, I'll say no. But it took a long time, it took a lot of work to be able to do the no, but, yeah. So, it depends on the situation, it depends on whether they're emotionally trying to get out of me what I'm not ready to give. But you sense that. So, if I have to be rude now, I don't care. Because I try to be pleasant about it, and if they don't accept it and they're trying to push it, ...

Participant 8

I've gotten better at this [saying no]

I must say it's not something that highly stresses me, in relation to requests from people, I'm okay I can extricate myself from that...I used to be very bad at it, again my ex-husband (he was quite a mentor really), I would say yes to everything and then go home and whinge, and he taught me you can say "Well, I'll see, or I'll let you know, or whatever" so I developed strategies to help...the other aspect of saying no, that I do find tricky though, is I kind of have the shiny magpie syndrome where I'm interested in a million different things and it's really hard for me to say, well okay don't start this course or...

So in that respect I find it tricky, especially, so say to myself, well I can put that on my list, this isn't the right time to do it, let's just wait, stay focused...so in that respect I find it tricky...

Participant 9

I'm doing a Master's thesis at the moment, so the stress levels are always up and down. Yeah, but what I'm thinking of (because I teach piano as well) so what I'm thinking is cutting down on piano teaching next year, to give more time to my thesis. And also, hopefully that will give me more time for myself to be able to do things that I want to do, and not feel like I'm really stressed out and having to manage my time all the time – that kind of thing. But I would say it's pretty good at the moment.

that's how it feels at the moment, especially with teaching. So, the health club does early morning sessions, they're like at 7.30 in the morning, and also lunch time sessions at 12.15, 1 pm. I like to go in the evenings, because it's like you've done a whole day of work, then you go, and exercise and you have a shower and you feel good. So, I prefer to go in the evenings. It's kind of hard at the moment because it clashes with my teaching, cause a lot of that teaching happens from 4 pm, so that's another reason why I want to cut down on that, so I can get more time to go for barre and those things, and not have to plan so much.

so like the house-mate thing, that was a big thing. And I'm still learning to say no to teaching requests, because people always ask, and then I'm like "Yeah I want to teach you, but I have all these other things I want to do as well" so, yeah. And my time is valuable, so...I just feel bad about saying no, and my sister's like "but you can only do so much"

And my dad's like "your thesis is your priority, you can't teach too much" because it's a lot of time

Participant 10

Yeah I think so...well you just say yes, maybe, and change your mind later...but it can be a bit too much on your time if you always say yes to everything, but you feel bad if you say no

Participant 11

Oh I'm very good at that

Researcher: have you always been, though?

No, it depends with whom. I have always since I was a child, had a very strong sense of justice when it comes to equity, and certain people I can say no to very easily. Other people I really struggle, but overall, I'm quite assertive. I'll just be like "Well, no I can't do that". The only time I won't say no when I really want to is if it's related to the kids.

But I didn't say no even though I really really wanted to. And for me, providing that support for him even though he stuffed up -- was more important than staying at home.

And I suppose I've had to learn to say no appropriately [laughter] Instead of just saying f*** that [laughter] I just use... I don't know if you've heard about the spoons? Something called spoon theory. It's where you wake up every morning and you've got so many spoons, and it might take a spoon to have a shower, And a spoon to complete a certain task. And every morning when you wake up you don't always have the same number of spoons. So, I've learnt just to say I don't have the spoons for it. I don't have the energy; I don't have what it's going to take. And I need to ration out my spoons every day. So, if I feel reactive and I want to growl at people I just say, no I don't have the spoons for it. I just can't do this it's going to cost too much.

Participant 12

I think I'm personally a very dedicated person, if I'm allocated or I want to do something, I want to do it well, and maybe a little bit of perfectionism as well. So sometimes I can't take on more things, but I maybe want to help my friends, or family, or my colleagues, but I still will do it, but it's in a way that I maybe have to sacrifice my sleeping time, or I forget eating sometimes, so that's kind of the challenge for me.

Yeah, I think so. It depends. Once I had a friend who I really wanted to meet when she came to my city, even if I have a whole day of work, I still want to meet her, I probably will still go out. It depends on the situation, if I can meet this person many times, I can say no, I really feel tired.

Self-acceptance

Participant 4

but as I've gotten more comfortable with myself I think wellbeing is about how I'm feeling inside myself. And, I think for me, there's a lot of self-acceptance in wellbeing

For me it's less exuberant happiness, and more the kind of contented, softer, and being very comfortable in my space and with myself.

Participant 6

so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days,

Participant 8

I have a lot going on which I like, maybe I shouldn't be so hard on myself you know, "I can't fit this in as well". It's something that kind of worries me because if I want to work another 20-odd years – which I do want to – I want to make sure I have the stamina because I tend to go like this...my ex-husband used to say to me "Gosh you're all or nothing!" so, all systems go, or I have a day when I just can't get off the couch kind-of-thing, and he said to me "You've got to learn to plod, you've got to learn to keep in more even..." So that was good advice, I've got to kind of integrate some rest in there, or whatever I need, and as you say, balance

Participant 11

when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else.

And then I need to prepare myself at the beginning, and I need to recharge at the end. But yeah, I think I'm getting better as I get older.

Self-awareness

Participant 1

So, some strategies for emotional regulation I've learnt on the way, but I recently, over the past year, I began to tend to it more actively. When I realised that a particular negative emotion like anger or sadness or stress is building up within myself, I usually delay it. I delay it by telling myself I shouldn't make a judgement right now, that I'm stressed or angry... I should delay this feeling until later and see if they're still present, then I will tend to it. A lot of times, I think, when stress and anger or sadness, grief builds up, it's in the spur of the moment and it can really make you engrossed in that, so what I usually do is take a bit of time to – not to ignore it – but to test whether it's permanent so I try not to think about it for a few hours. If it

happens during the day, I'll just delay it to the afternoon, or at night in the evening. If it's still present, I will tend to it and see "why do I feel this way" "do I have any justification for feeling this way". If there's something that's actually bad has happened. And I try to... if it's work related stress I try to break it down to tasks, I break it down to a small task and I stand back a bit and analyse those tasks, and estimate how long they would take, and usually I find out that it's something enlarged in my mind... in reality it wouldn't actually take that much time for that, and if I use my time while I can, I comfortably finish the task. That usually helps with task-related stresses. If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

Yes, spontaneous and do things as they come up, and I think having a routine or a plan, I feel very restricted by that. I probably won't establish a concrete plan or routine but there are some things that I do, daily, and regularly such as prayer, and such as exercise. I think knowing that I score highly on this trait will probably alert me to take care of myself more, to recognise that I am more sensitive to stimuli and things than other people and this will help me to be more mindful of how I'm feeling

I really enjoyed doing it, because I think it's fun. I just like doing all kinds of tests to see if the test result is actually how I think of myself, just to compare if my own self-perception is consistent with test results. And then the PERMA... I haven't had much contact with those measures, it was interesting to see how I scored on those

Participant 2

in the last five years I've become a lot more aware of how stress affects me, and just noticing when I'm stressed, whereas before it was a bit too late to do anything. So, now I'm a bit more aware of the feelings in my body and things like that of when things are getting a bit too much

I think when I read a bit more about it, cause I thought "this sounds a bit like me" I sort of recognised a lot of things and I always thought a lot of things associated with that trait were negative, and I've learnt that there's positive things to it, so that gave me that recognition. Cause I've always gone through life feeling like I'm a bit more sensitive than others, maybe I cry a lot more easily, but then by understanding it I learnt to recognise that it has positive qualities as well that can be good, so I've learnt to accept that about myself a bit more, and be more comfortable with it.

Yeah, cause I've always felt I'm quiet and shy as a child, cause I'm an only child, I was very distant from my mother, so I didn't have that kind of supportive relationship, so, I've always thought that was why I've been shy and always wanting to please others, because I didn't have that validation cause I didn't get that from my mum. So, to kind of be aware that it's also a personality trait that might be innate, it's kind of interesting.

Mm, yeah, I can definitely relate to that, I wouldn't say I've suffered depression but I do have issues with anxiety, and I think I always have but I never kind of realised them until the last five years or so. I've found personally it's having that awareness, this is the way you are, and you're anxious and that's kind of the way to overcome a lot of issues and improve your wellbeing. So, if I just continued and got stressed and didn't take time to care for myself or do some of that, I think it would, the anxiety and stress would just eat me up. So, I think that's key, is just having that knowledge – at least for me – that knowledge and awareness has been really important. And personally for me, my partner has been really important in that awareness because he's quite insightful and he's learning psychology and stuff like that, and also being, I guess, similar to me but different, has really helped improve my wellbeing. Especially in the last couple of years, so I think that's been really good.

Participant 3

Well when I was a teenager, it was a bit hard, and it was teenage stuff, and I found body positivity blogs and Instagram accounts and stuff, and I got into feminism and accepting yourself and all that stuff and it really helped.

Participant 4

Yeah. It's an interesting one, because probably it's changed over the years. I used to think that wellbeing was like a set thing, it was probably based on what I thought things should be like, but as I've gotten more comfortable with myself I think wellbeing is about how I'm feeling inside myself. And, I think for me, there's a lot of self-acceptance in wellbeing. You know, wellbeing isn't about having lots of friends and going to parties, which is kind of what I thought I had to have, to be happy, but now it's also about sitting with a good book or quietly chatting with friends or stuff like that. For me it's less exuberant happiness, and more the kind of contented, softer, and being very comfortable in my space and with myself.

Yeah, yeah, probably also not dealing with depression and anxiety. So, I've had depression and anxiety in the past and it's really quite stable at the moment. And I'm

pretty good at identifying warning signs, and things like that, of when things might not be going so well. And I'm much better at dealing with those warning signs early. So that's probably another aspect of my wellbeing that's really good at the moment.

I think it has, I think that going to bed ritual, having that time and now I understand, it kind of happened accidentally because we have different modes of sleep, but now I protect it, if that makes sense? So, it's yeah, definitely, I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

Participant 5

Naturally, I'm a very positive person, and I'm always trying to be a happy person, so even if I'm tired or grumpy, I'll try and not let it sort of... I'll try not to snap at people. But today I'm just feeling a bit – you know, the grey weather, the rain... But generally, I'm actually really good, I feel really blessed.

Participant 6

I just know for me – and being HSP and being prone to a little bit of anxiety – it would not be good for my wellbeing and it would not be good for my relationship with my husband, and I'm not prepared to compromise. If I was thirty, I would say "Absolutely yes" but I can benefit so many people – hundreds of people, thousands of people – doing what I'm doing so I'm excited about that. Health – health's very important because when I sit on our cheap couch I get a sore back and I have to go to the physio, so finally we're getting a good couch. Hopefully I won't have to go to the physio, but I know that, and I aim for, and strive for excellent health. I strive for flourishing – not in a perfectionistic way – but I feel excited because I know the pathways and I know what works and what doesn't work. And I'm so grateful for that.

But I feel so excited because I feel like if I take care of my own wellbeing, I could be so supportive to other people, or at least direct them to different resources.

Yes, that's a good question. I think it's about looking at where I am now and looking at where I was...like a personal best. And also I think I have a fairly good ability to self-evaluate and self-awareness and it's about how I feel, and I also know that I'm

being a little bit more assertive with my mother and other people, and I think that's about being more boundaried. And there is a little bit of push-back, but I know that it's important for me to do that because I know I have been too passive, so when people work in a very male environment, they can become quite direct/brutal in a male, blokey environment, and I think women are far more nuanced and I think HSPs are even more nuanced again.

And I've come to realise that in the past I've felt quite wounded, or quite upset, and the intention hasn't been to upset me, it's just the male speech and way of being, and I've realised that it's really important for me to be present-centred and grounded and really...

And I'm kind of rolling that out to all friendships and relationships, because I think in the past I've felt quite wounded and...But also to check in with myself and ask "Hey [self], are you being a little bit too sensitive? Maybe you are, and that wasn't their intent. Let it go" you know what I mean? When you're just having relationships with people you don't see that often, it's not a big deal, but when it's someone you live with or you see all the time...

So, I can't save everyone, cause I've got to save myself and put my oxygen mask on first, and I'm glad I've come to that realisation.

Yes, and what I teach primary school kids is their invisible jacket with their zippy pockets...they have their tips and tools in their zippy pockets what works for them...it's customised, it's different for the individual, and it's different on a different day and a different dosage....they know what works. And that's exciting too because I feel like it gives you confidence to go into almost any situation and you know you've got what you need...but I'll say I still had some trepidation about Christmas

Participant 7

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself. And the way I eat...I make sure I eat highly nutritious food and I'll take the time to prepare for myself, you know. I've had a couple of instances the last few weeks, and I've been preparing the food

But I'm not making it less than I would, making the meal less than I would for somebody else. Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach

that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

If I think I've said something to somebody despite what I mean, if I feel they've taken it wrongly, I can sense that, and I go oh, they're bothered, they've misinterpreted what I've said. And then it becomes really important for me to approach them, and say I just wanted to clarify that this is what I meant and I'm sorry if you took it any other way or if it came across as harsh. There was once a time I was so proud that there was no way I would apologise, unless I knew that I was in the wrong. Now sorry trips out of my mouth so easily, it's like "I'm sorry, I've upset you, I didn't mean to do that" so I find it really easy to apologise. I don't feel I've got to take back what I've said, but just to apologise for the impact that I've had that was not my intention. Even though sometimes it's got a lot to do with them, you know, so it's not going to hurt me to say I'm sorry.

Participant 8

I'm very conscious of the language that I use, so I've gotten rid of the word "should" you know that just makes me feel crap, so I'm very conscious of the language I use and also with self-compassion I guess also being more patient with myself...I'm like the tortoise, I'm not always the quickest in the room to pick up concepts or whatever, but once I get it, it's there for life kind of thing. For instance, I'm learning Spanish, but I put in a lot of work to get it in there, sometimes if I compare myself with my classmates, they're on it and they're rattling off phrases and I go "Oh, oh, what's going on?" I'm learning to say to myself "Look just wait a minute, it's just different learning styles, this is just the way I learn, I'll get it, I just have to put in maybe a bit more work than them, I'm a tortoise, and ever since I associated with the animal, I find it's better, not such a negative connotation more a positive funny thing, like "I'm a tortoise, I'll get there"

Participant 9

I stop following people whose posts I don't like seeing on my news feed on Facebook, even if I like spending time with the person who posted them in real life. Unfortunately you can't do that on Instagram so I end up unfollowing them on that platform (although it makes me feel bad doing it sometimes because I'm afraid I'll hurt their feelings). As a general rule I don't really like adding people on social media as it tends to change my perception of them, especially if I don't enjoy what they post. I also don't really like using Facebook Messenger or other messaging apps often as I don't like that the apps can track when you were last on them - I keep this feature off on Facebook and Whatsapp. The other feature that I'm not a big fan of is

that the tick on both apps turns blue when the person has read your message, because then I expect a reply. I prefer email or SMS because there's none of the above and I don't feel as compelled to keep checking. I also decided to stop following the news from the start of this year, as I find them anxiety-inducing. If I do look at news, I tend to look more at general articles, e.g. new advances in research, an article on a well-known person/ composition, or an article reviewing a live concert.

Participant 11

So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else.

it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

And when I do get a little bit cranky, I just step back and say why did I do that, It wasn't about him. And at times I'll just say to him, it wasn't you darling, it's just me. I'm just in a bit of turmoil, I'm going to step outside and... After I come back in I genuinely apologize because he doesn't deserve to be my backlash.

So, it's an ongoing pursuit, let's put it that way, so I guess, I do all those but I personally gain much more from all of them, my family and my dog's, than they I feel like I could give them, in return. So yeah, I suppose that's how I do it, but I just accepting them and embracing them...

I will always contemplate what I'm wanting to achieve and what that looks like so visibly what does that look like and I think that's one thing That was just drilled into us when I was doing my special education and working with students with special needs. Ok well what do we want to achieve and then having goalposts along the way. so smart goals they need to be meaningful they need to be relevant, you need to be able to assess them they need to be Timely. So I'll go through and say well I want to achieve this And what does it look like Visually what does it look like and how will I know I have achieved it And then break it down into small Chunks So I'll know if I'm on track Cos I am quite a spontaneous individual and just go yay Jump in at the deep end and get myself Into a bit of a fix so And then I use a lot of energy just treading water So there has to be that strategic planning.

So, it's just that being realistic And having the overall goal And the steps along the way

Yes and that way it is sustainable because the Crash and Burn... If I just jump in now, I end up having flare ups. And I'd be in bed for a week or two. So, I've learnt that the principles I applied when I was teaching I need to apply those to myself

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional. I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me. And everything that my body does, is to protect me. It's here for me so I need to respect it in return.

So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

And some mornings I might wake up and I've got three tablespoons and two teaspoons. But that seems to work really well for me it helps me visualise what energy I have and how much I'm going to spend. And sometimes like recently I spent more energy -- and I knew I had things to do during the day -- but for me personally, I wanted to go and work in the garden for two hours. Yet I knew that was going to take up a lot of my resources, my physical energy, but I did it anyway. Because that was for me and it just meant that I had less reserves for everybody else. And it was like, well yes, I needed that. Because if I hadn't done that and spent all my reserves on you, then I would have been really grumpy [laughter] Because I need to do something for myself too.

Participant 12

think it is more self-awareness. Let's say, how many times, when I was in an emotional situation, I can control my mind or control my emotion. This time, I think oh yeah, I do better than before.

Self-care

Participant 1

I haven't had an enduring crisis that's negatively impacted my wellbeing for an extended period of time, for quite a while, so I haven't had that recently. But that's something that happened quite frequently last year, but this year I've grown a lot

more. Yeah, this year I think I've grown a lot more, I have a lot more methods to maintain some level wellbeing

So, some strategies for emotional regulation I've learnt on the way, but I recently, over the past year, I began to tend to it more actively. When I realised that a particular negative emotion like anger or sadness or stress is building up within myself, I usually delay it. I delay it by telling myself I shouldn't make a judgement right now, that I'm stressed or angry... I should delay this feeling until later and see if they're still present, then I will tend to it. A lot of times, I think, when stress and anger or sadness, grief builds up, it's in the spur of the moment and it can really make you engrossed in that, so what I usually do is take a bit of time to – not to ignore it – but to test whether it's permanent so I try not to think about it for a few hours. If it happens during the day I'll just delay it to the afternoon, or at night in the evening. If it's still present I will tend to it and see "why do I feel this way" "do I have any justification for feeling this way". If there's something that's actually bad has happened. And I try to... if it's work related stress I try to break it down to tasks, I break it down to a small task and I stand back a bit and analyse those tasks, and estimate how long they would take, and usually I find out that it's something enlarged in my mind... in reality it wouldn't actually take that much time for that, and if I use my time while I can, I comfortably finish the task. That usually helps with task-related stresses. If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

I think it's interesting to know that I score highly on this trait, but practically I don't think it would change too much, because I think I already have a good routine in place to take care of myself to regulate how I feel. And just another thing is that I don't think it will help me or change or help me establish a plan, just because I dislike plans, because I just like to be free-flowing...

Participant 2

I do proactively take the time now to do something. Sometimes it's just like to take a bath or something like that to just relax and unwind. So, I'm a lot more aware, physically, the sensations of stress in my body.

I think when I read a bit more about it, cause I thought "this sounds a bit like me" I sort of recognised a lot of things and I always thought a lot of things associated with

that trait were negative, and I've learnt that there's positive things to it, so that gave me that recognition. Cause I've always gone through life feeling like I'm a bit more sensitive than others, maybe I cry a lot more easily, but then by understanding it I learnt to recognise that it has positive qualities as well that can be good, so I've learnt to accept that about myself a bit more, and be more comfortable with it.

Mm, yeah, I can definitely relate to that, I wouldn't say I've suffered depression but I do have issues with anxiety, and I think I always have but I never kind of realised them until the last five years or so. I've found personally it's having that awareness, this is the way you are, and you're anxious and that's kind of the way to overcome a lot of issues and improve your wellbeing. So, if I just continued and got stressed and didn't take time to care for myself or do some of that, I think it would, the anxiety and stress would just eat me up. So, I think that's key, is just having that knowledge – at least for me – that knowledge and awareness has been really important. And personally for me, my partner has been really important in that awareness because he's quite insightful and he's learning psychology and stuff like that, and also being, I guess, similar to me but different, has really helped improve my wellbeing. Especially in the last couple of years, so I think that's been really good.

Participant 3

alone time is very important. I think my skin care routine, I like to put makeup on and I also do cross-stitch...you can turn your brain off, and it's by myself!

Participant 4

And it felt a bit easier for me to understand my self-protectiveness, in that's a little bit easier, so it's good.

the type of work I do I design learning and development programs for organisations, like a lot of leadership stuff. A lot of my work is got my headphones on, and I'm really down and focused, and I can look up and go "Oh it's been two and a half hours and I haven't looked up. But people kind of...I think in learning and org dev roles, people know that you're not necessarily at your desk, so they don't expect emails all the time. I only look at my inbox in the morning and the evening, so I might look at emails in the morning and I don't even notice them for the rest of the day, so there's a bit of solitude in that as well. I walk a lot, I walk places, and I prefer walking or getting on the tram, because it's [unclear] so I'm walking on my own a lot so there's that

A few years ago, I had a manager that was really supportive, and he showed me this thing which is $E + R = O$ which is Event + the response gives you the Outcome. And what he said was, 'What we want to get people doing is thinking what's the outcome we want, then think of the response' so we're flipping it, instead of going E R O we're going Event, thinking Outcome, and then what's the response. Choose the response that's going to give you the outcome you want. And I've never forgotten that and it's really hard, but the more I practice it the better I get at it and even if you're really panicking inside, you can do that cognitive step of "What do I want to happen here" this takes it out of that hyper...and having that equation helpful, it's logical. And I build it now into all my training programs for leaders.

I think it has, I think that going to bed ritual, having that time and now I understand, it kind of happened accidentally because we have different modes of sleep, but now I protect it, if that makes sense? So, it's yeah, definitely, I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

Participant 5

It's all about learning how to make a graceful exit, isn't it? Like it's only just got started, and I'm like...what do I say...I've got somewhere else to be? I don't know, it's hard...In the end I find that if I say no at the start, rather than go for a bit, but that's not fair on me either, or them...do you know what I mean? Sometimes, it's like balancing it. But it's not...it doesn't hinder my lifestyle, but I can say the last few times I've been out, it's been more one-on-one with my friends.

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years) and I know how to seek out high quality

connections. So I know on a neurobiological level how important the dogs are for me and my husband,

So for me, I experience a lot of positive emotion, one of my highest strengths is humour, and the second is prudence, so that feels like having one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake – but I've learnt to handle that. Engagement – I feel like I'm in a state of flow quite often – particularly when I'm volunteering

Relationships – I've learned more about that and compassion (I'll talk more about that later), but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past, I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care. And I think at my age I'm really becoming more 'boundaried', and I'm excited about the fact that it's like return on investment, in terms of resources and energy and "which walls am I going to put my ladder up against?"

I just know for me – and being HSP and being prone to a little bit of anxiety – it would not be good for my wellbeing and it would not be good for my relationship with my husband, and I'm not prepared to compromise. If I was thirty, I would say "Absolutely yes" but I can benefit so many people – hundreds of people, thousands of people – doing what I'm doing so I'm excited about that. Health – health's very important because when I sit on our cheap couch I get a sore back and I have to go to the physio, so finally we're getting a good couch. Hopefully I won't have to go to the physio, but I know that, and I aim for, and strive for excellent health. I strive for flourishing – not in a perfectionistic way – but I feel excited because I know the pathways and I know what works and what doesn't work. And I'm so grateful for that.

And so what I've realised through Bessel van de Kolk's work and he's talking about movement, I think yoga and walking is incredibly important for me. So I really want to walk every day...I mean if I'm busy and I don't get to walk one day I can survive, but my days with walking and yoga are so much better.

Yes, that's a good question. I think it's about looking at where I am now and looking at where I was...like a personal best. And also I think I have a fairly good ability to self-evaluate and self-awareness and it's about how I feel, and I also know that I'm being a little bit more assertive with my mother and other people, and I think that's about being more boundaried. And there is a little bit of push-back, but I know that it's important for me to do that because I know I have been too passive, so when people work in a very male environment, they can become quite direct/brutal in a

male, blokey environment, and I think women are far more nuanced and I think HSPs are even more nuanced again.

And I've come to realise that in the past I've felt quite wounded, or quite upset, and the intention hasn't been to upset me, it's just the male speech and way of being, and I've realised that it's really important for me to be present-centred and grounded and really...

And I mean, that's kind of fun, we get along fine 99.9% of the time, it's just the 0.1% of the time. And I'm kind of rolling that out to all friendships and relationships, because I think in the past I've felt quite wounded and...But also to check in with myself and ask "Hey [self], are you being a little bit too sensitive? Maybe you are, and that wasn't their intent. Let it go" you know what I mean? When you're just having relationships with people you don't see that often, it's not a big deal, but when it's someone you live with or you see all the time...And I called out a friend who was dropping the F-bomb and she got really angry about it and we've kind of disconnected and I think that's probably a good thing. So, I can't save everyone, cause I've got to save myself and put my oxygen mask on first, and I'm glad I've come to that realisation.

And just quickly on that, I've realised when I'm with my dear friends, You can see the photos on Facebook it really energises me, But like at Christmas I was so fatigued being with my family of origin, and outwardly I was really gracious and all the rest, but on the car drive home I felt so triggered. And you know what I should have done? I should have got out of the car and just gone for a 5-minute walk with the dogs. And Bessel van der Kolk says that on 9-11 it was the people running away from, and run to their homes who were safe, because they were able to physically move their bodies and run even though they were traumatised and triggered. But it was the people who were locked into an aeroplane seat that was about to take off, they had all the cortisol racing through their body but they weren't able to move their bodies to dissipate...And I realised I got a bit triggered at my family of origin at Christmas and what I realised would have been good was to pull the car over, go for a little walk with the dogs to get rid of all that unease. Good to know, good to know. And solitude, I agree is regenerative.

The big thing that you said... focus on...savouring, savouring is light, it's much lighter than mindfulness for example...we're still being realistic but we're zeroing in, and it's so powerful and it's much safer, and I love teaching the kids that and it seems to work very well. And savouring into the future, savouring into the past...what was the

best thing about getting up this morning...having breakfast, seeing your friends at school...

Participant 8

And another thing, I would add to challenge is solitude, the time alone...oh gosh, I value that greatly, but I get interrupted all the time, like I'll read a book and my family come, and cause we're so talkative, they'll come and sit down and have a conversation with me, and I have to say to them "I'm reading a book, I'll talk to you in a minute" because I really value talking to them but I really value my solitude as well. So I'm actually struggling to get enough solitude...so that would be my two challenges at the moment

I'm very conscious of the language that I use, so I've gotten rid of the word "should" you know that just makes me feel crap, so I'm very conscious of the language I use and also with self-compassion I guess also being more patient with myself...I'm like the tortoise, I'm not always the quickest in the room to pick up concepts or whatever, but once I get it, it's there for life kind of thing. For instance, I'm learning Spanish, but I put in a lot of work to get it in there, sometimes if I compare myself with my classmates, they're on it and they're rattling off phrases and I go "Oh, oh, what's going on?" I'm learning to say to myself "Look just wait a minute, it's just different learning styles, this is just the way I learn, I'll get it, I just have to put in maybe a bit more work than them, I'm a tortoise, and ever since I associated with the animal, I find it's better, not such a negative connotation more a positive funny thing, like "I'm a tortoise, I'll get there"

Participant 9

because I'm doing a Master's thesis at the moment, so the stress levels are always up and down. Yeah, but what I'm thinking of (because I teach piano as well) so what I'm thinking is cutting down on piano teaching next year, to give more time to my thesis. And also, hopefully that will give me more time for myself to be able to do things that I want to do, and not feel like I'm really stressed out and having to manage my time all the time – that kind of thing. But I would say it's pretty good at the moment.

So, I like to embroider and crochet and knit and stuff like that, and I find that really helps me balancing against all the reading that I have to do for the thesis. So, I try to make sure that I can [unclear] every night, so maybe 10pm or something, I shut down the computer and then just like wind down, go to bed, and then I just pick whatever I feel like doing, so whether it's crochet or embroidery or whatever. And then, maybe do that for half an hour to forty-five minutes, and then go to sleep. I do try to

devote that kind of time on weekdays, then on weekends I like to spend time with my partner. So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing. So, I guess that helps to balance out from the work and stuff. And what I do as well – I try to do this every night as well or when I have free time – I try to make a to-do list for the next day, so that helps me because I wake up and I know what I'm going to do, as opposed to waking up and I have to think about what to do.

Yeah, so it helps with muscle toning and stuff and I wanted to try it at the start of the year, so finally I got around to it, and I signed up in August, and I started going. So, I think that's been a good improvement, cause before I think I was probably working too much and not getting enough physical exercise. So, what I'm doing at the moment is only going once or twice a week, but my goal is to get it up to maybe three or four times a week if I can. So that is part of my plan for balancing everything out.

that's how it feels at the moment, especially with teaching. So, the health club does early morning sessions, So, I prefer to go in the evenings.

Yeah, so when I crochet at night, when I do all the craft stuff at night I just kind of give myself that hour to just not think about anything. And then on the weekends as well, I'll just spend time with my partner cause he has a huge Lego collection, so he likes to make stuff with his Lego and I'll sit with him and just do some work, and other times I'll just help him with the Lego and stuff. So, I think that's also pretty nice because I don't have to be anywhere... So, basically at nights, and on the weekends.

I think for me, the stress – I think it can be managed if I plan really well, If I plan in advance what I'm going to do and then just do it when I see it in my to-do list, cause I guess it just prompts me to do it, and I don't have to think about it.

Cause like, I've put all my systems in place and I just do it. Another thing I just thought of, is probably social media. I'm pretty much non-existent on social media, like I have accounts, and I used to be way more active on them, but I found that it was pretty bad for my mental wellbeing, especially, so I basically cut down on it and so, I never go on Facebook except for work-related stuff. If for example, someone was asking me to teach their sons or daughters and I didn't have availability I put a Facebook post and wait for someone to get back to me and then just pass it on. But that's basically the only reason I go on Facebook.

I stop following people whose posts I don't like seeing on my news feed on Facebook, even if I like spending time with the person who posted them in real life. Unfortunately you can't do that on Instagram so I end up unfollowing them on that platform (although it makes me feel bad doing it sometimes because I'm afraid I'll hurt their feelings). As a general rule I don't really like adding people on social media as it tends to change my perception of them, especially if I don't enjoy what they

post. I also don't really like using Facebook Messenger or other messaging apps often as I don't like that the apps can track when you were last on them - I keep this feature off on Facebook and Whatsapp. The other feature that I'm not a big fan of is that the tick on both apps turns blue when the person has read your message, because then I expect a reply. I prefer email or SMS because there's none of the above and I don't feel as compelled to keep checking. I also decided to stop following the news from the start of this year, as I find them anxiety-inducing. If I do look at news, I tend to look more at general articles, e.g. new advances in research, an article on a well-known person/ composition, or an article reviewing a live concert.

Participant 11

So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else.

it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

So I'll go through and say well I want to achieve this And what does it look like Visually what does it look like and how will I know I have achieved it And then break it down into small Chunks So I'll know if I'm on track Cos I am quite a spontaneous individual and just go yay Jump in at the deep end and get myself Into a bit of a fix so And then I use a lot of energy just treading water So there has to be that strategic planning.

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional.

I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me. And everything that my body does, is to protect me. It's here for me so I need to respect it in return. And I do that through a variety of ways just by taking time out by eating well My alcohol intake that sort of my default. If something is too stressful I've got a history of well let's open a bottle of wine tonight. And now it's like that's not healthy for my body, It's not helping at restore or rest it's just taxing it further So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

And I suppose I've had to learn to say no appropriately [laughter] Instead of just saying f*** that [laughter] I just use... I don't know if you've heard about the spoons? Something called spoon Theory. It's where you wake up every morning and you've got so many spoons, and it might take a spoon to have a shower, And a spoon to complete a certain task. And every morning when you wake up you don't always have the same number of spoons. So, I've learnt just to say I don't have the spoons for it. I don't have the energy, I don't have what it's going to take. And I need to ration out my spoons everyday. So if I feel reactive and I want to growl at people I just say, no I don't have the spoons for it. I just can't do this it's going to cost too much.

And some mornings I might wake up and I've got three tablespoons and two teaspoons. But that seems to work really well for me it helps me visualise what energy I have and how much I'm going to spend. And sometimes like recently I spent more energy -- and I knew I had things to do during the day -- but for me personally, I wanted to go and work in the garden for two hours. Yet I knew that was going to take up a lot of my resources, my physical energy, but I did it anyway. Because that was for me and it just meant that I had less reserves for everybody else. And it was like, well yes, I needed that. Because if I hadn't done that and spent all my reserves on you, then I would have been really grumpy [laughter] Because I need to do something for myself too.

Self-compassion

Participant 1

self-compassion...not really, after hearing about it that's something I'm probably very bad at. Although I'm usually non-judgemental to myself, but I'm not compassionate, so to speak. I think compassion is a positive thing, and non-judgemental is neutral, I think. I'm just neutral to myself. I think, something I find challenging with self-compassion is, every time I try to tell myself "you've been through some very difficult things" I just think of other people have, there are many people in this world currently and in the past who have many more difficult things, and I sometimes feel just a hint guilty if I tell myself that...try to tell myself that I've been through a lot and I should rest. Yep, so I think self-compassion is difficult for me because I see so many people who are *not* me who are far worse than myself, so I don't think I'm in a position to let myself off, basically. Yeah. So, I really agree on what you said before, it's easier to have compassion for other people than for myself.

Participant 2

Um, probably not as much as other things, no. Something I probably should do more of, yeah, but it's not like the top thing I do.

Okay yeah, so, having that self-talk like "this will pass" and "it's just a stressful time" or "it'll be okay". Everyone has these moments, and it's not catastrophising it like I used to, but just being a bit more comfortable sitting with it and thinking it'll pass and it'll work out.

Participant 3

Self-acceptance I reckon that would be up near the top, cause if you're hard on yourself all the time then you can never not be stressed, I guess.

Well when I was a teenager, it was a bit hard, and it was teenage stuff, and I found body positivity blogs and Instagram accounts and stuff, and I got into feminism and accepting yourself and all that stuff and it really helped.

being able to forgive myself for mistakes. I'm quite hard on myself and I'm very perfectionistic, and that's something too I can forgive myself for stuff...

Participant 4

Researcher: like "I shouldn't be feeling this way" or "I should be more like this"

Yep, it's definitely been like that for me. It was interesting, because – I think I mentioned – that when I was doing the survey, my husband looked over my shoulder at one of the questions, and said "Nah, you're way higher! I've never met anyone who startles as easily as you do." And I went "Isn't everyone like this?" "No!" [laughter]

[self-compassion] That's been my...I write a weekly blog and send it to friends and they will attest that I have every couple of months I'll come back to self-compassion. It's something that I have struggled with but I think that I'm getting better at, and I think the more you dig in to self-compassion around it being...and there's different aspects...but it's not just about accepting and going "yeah, whatever" but it's about "well I can be compassionate" that's where I am at the moment, but there's also this sense of "How do I deal with this better next time, what can I learn?" and I really love that aspect of it. The other aspect of it that I really like is how would you treat a friend? And I'm probably a very compassionate friend that people go to, fi they've

got an issue, so I kind of go, "Right, if [friend] had this problem, what could I do, what could I say" so I find that aspect of self-compassion really good as well.

I think it has, I think that going to bed ritual, having that time and now I understand, it kind of happened accidentally because we have different modes of sleep, but now I protect it, if that makes sense? So, it's yeah, definitely, I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

Participant 5

Oh massively important! And I don't practice it as much as I should. That's one area that I really do need to work on, because I think a lot of us can be hard on ourselves. But that's one area I probably need to work on, definitely.

Participant 6

Yes self-compassion more and more it really works for me I use Kristin Neff's. The more I do it the more it works, yep.

Participant 7

I like that sense of "I'm okay with myself and with the world"

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself. And the way I eat...I make sure I eat highly nutritious food and I'll take the time to prepare for myself, you know.

Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

Participant 8

[self-compassion] Definitely, definitely. That's really high on my radar...it's something I've had to practice and it's a work in progress...

I'm very conscious of the language that I use, so I've gotten rid of the word "should" you know that just makes me feel crap, so I'm very conscious of the language I use and also with self-compassion I guess also being more patient with myself...I'm like the tortoise, I'm not always the quickest in the room to pick up concepts or whatever, but once I get it, it's there for life kind of thing. For instance, I'm learning Spanish, but I put in a lot of work to get it in there, sometimes if I compare myself with my classmates, they're on it and they're rattling off phrases and I go "Oh, oh, what's going on?" I'm learning to say to myself "Look just wait a minute, it's just different learning styles, this is just the way I learn, I'll get it, I just have to put in maybe a bit more work than them, I'm a tortoise, and ever since I associated with the animal, I find it's better, not such a negative connotation more a positive funny thing, like "I'm a tortoise, I'll get there"

I think definitely in relation to relationships it's definitely improved it. It's ironic, because my ex-husband, he was the calm one and I was kind of the [gesturing] and now my new husband, he's the [gesturing] one, and I'm the calm one! I'm the one who is always the calm voice of reason when he's jumping up and down, and I'm going "Well let's just think about this...what we're going to do about it..." So definitely in relationships, and also in relation to myself...self-compassion...definitely in relation to that as well. So I would say definitely it's helped improved my wellbeing, definitely.

Participant 9

So, I think that was a period in time where self-compassion was literally non-existent. But I'm not really sure how it came about, how I got myself out of it, but I think doing my honours thesis has had quite a big impact in helping me get out of it. Because like, just focusing on the work every day, and kind of distancing yourself from what you're feeling and what you're thinking and stuff...it's more about "I'm going to get this work done, and I'm not going to think about anything else" and I think that really helped. And then, I started to feel more and more happy with myself for getting all this work done, and I think this helped with all the self-compassion and stuff like that. So, this year has been pretty big as well, so I finished my thesis in October 2017, and so the positive feelings were like building up, getting better. And then I went through a break-up in January this year, so that was really tough, but I think it was good because it helped me re-address my relationship with myself and how I wanted to be good to myself. So, now I think it's good, because I've gotten this really good balance, so I think it's like natural...I'm not sure if I'm consciously practicing self-

compassion but I think maybe when we get into the flow of things, then it comes naturally.

Participant 10

Yeah, I think so, yeah I do...

Researcher: Being gentle with yourself if you make mistakes and stuff like that...?

That's right, yeah

Participant 11

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional. I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me. And everything that my body does, is to protect me. It's here for me so I need to respect it in return. And I do that through a variety of ways just by taking time out by eating well

And now it's like that's not healthy for my body, It's not helping at restore or rest it's just taxing it further So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

[self-compassion] Critical. Yes, that's something I've been working a lot on. And not just me emotionally and intellectually but also physically it's about loving myself which is very difficult for me to do at times

Participant 12

I do that a lot, I think no-one can be successful always, so "this time maybe I didn't get the grades that I expected, so is it because I didn't do much review, or the wrong sentence, or I didn't sleep too well the night before the exam" so I will find what I can improve, for next time, so that's makes me feel a lot better rather than just getting upset. I think I always regard everything as a good learning opportunity. "Even if I didn't get it, but I tried" so, I always talk to myself "Yes, you will always have other chances."

Sensory stimulation

Participant 2

I'd say that, like I can deal with stress, but I don't deal with having to do a lot of things at the same time – that really stresses me out. My partner uses the analogy of a cup, everyone has a cup, and I think my cup gets full and it's a lot fuller already, then it can like tip over a lot easier than some other people, because I probably have more anxious tendencies and things like that, so that can really precipitate things into some 'not very wellbeing' so yeah, stress would be the main thing, yeah.

Yeah. Like I find that, even just smells, and noise...there's probably people that are super sensitive, I'm probably not at the top you know, I'd probably be like around the middle, but yeah, I'm just very sensitive to loud noises and smells and things like that. Like, a lot of stimulation, I can handle it, but I'm not comfortable, yeah.

Participant 4

like, I walk into a room and I'm just, everything is just so there, in my face. So it kind of felt like "oh, this is something I haven't explored" but it's really 'insightful giving' – not sure what the right word is for that, but...

"Nah, you're way higher! I've never met anyone who startles as easily as you do." And I went "Isn't everyone like this?" "No!" [laughter]

Because even things like feeling the cold, and those kinds of things were quite interesting. Especially for those things, because you can't step inside other people's bodies.

And in particular if I've got a lot on, I'll choose a book – I'll often use science-fiction, because it's SO far outside and I get absorbed in a different universe, and that can be a really nice way to just switch my brain off, and have alone time, just before I go to sleep. And I find that really beneficial. And because it's an audiobook it takes away the eye....

one of my biggest wellbeing challenges, is that if I'm in that really heightened emotional response it sticks to me, and I'd really love for it not to stick. That's probably one of my challenges. And it [unclear] okay, you're fine now I've got to go and have a lie-down. I just have to lie down for a half hour, if I can do that, I'm okay,

but that's tough when you're at work or other places. And I think there's always this balance between... I think I've gotten better at not getting into that really...I'm slower to get into that state, but then I still kind of struggle to calm down.

the type of work I do I design learning and development programs for organisations, like a lot of leadership stuff. A lot of my work is got my headphones on, and I'm really down and focused, and I can look up and go "Oh it's been two and a half hours and I haven't looked up. But people kind of...I think in learning and org dev roles, people know that you're not necessarily at your desk, so they don't expect emails all the time. I only look at my inbox in the morning and the evening, so I might look at emails in the morning and I don't even notice them for the rest of the day, so there's a bit of solitude in that as well. I walk a lot, I walk places, and I prefer walking or getting on the tram, because it's [unclear] so I'm walking on my own a lot so there's that

We've just changed offices recently and gone from having too many people in a small office, now we've got heaps of space, and I'm a bit calmer...I've got breathing space

Absolutely. I have little things like, I don't like hearing people eat, loud eaters you know [laughter] and then, my husband, if we go to restaurant or something, they have to take the plate away as soon as I finish, and my husband goes "That's your high sensitivity" [laughter] Now it's become a little bit of a...he'll notice something and go "I know what that is!" [laughter]

Participant 5

If I don't get vitamin D I feel awful. So this weekend with the beautiful weather and daylight saving I was on Cloud 9, but I had a bad night's sleep and then, today was one of those days when I didn't get out to go for a walk – which is rare – and also I came home to get some news from my dad that our neighbour we've known for years is pretty much dying, so I kind of feel sad about that. And I've also been trying to organise my parents' passports and that took my time today, so I feel like today's one of those days where I haven't given to myself. But that's very rare, I'm generally very balanced and more energetic, and so, I'm sorry, you probably haven't got the best version of me...

I didn't know about it, but I do talk about what I understand as an empath...I would say I'm an empath. I can really feel people's emotions...

Well I can go to a shopping centre, and I need to get out after a while, because I feel like the energy...I don't know if that's the same thing, but I can't be somewhere where there's a lot of people for too long, for that reason.

cause the fact that you just told me about shopping centres, I just thought that was me....but, sometimes, I just know that I just can't do crowds. I say to my friends "I can't do crowds" or for too long...I'm one of these people that goes in early, if I have to go the Northland, I go in early, do what I need to do, and get out. I love shopping, don't get me wrong, but after a couple of hours, with all the crowds, there's something in me, it just drains me, and I don't get it!

well that explains a lot. Sometimes it gets to a point where I'm with friends, and I've kind of like hit a wall, and I just need to get out of there...Oh, so that explains that! I thought there was something wrong with me!

It's all about learning how to make a graceful exit, isn't it? Like it's only just got started, and I'm like...what do I say...I've got somewhere else to be? I don't know, it's hard...In the end I find that if I say no at the start, rather than go for a bit, but that's not fair on me either, or them...do you know what I mean? Sometimes, it's like balancing it. But it's not...it doesn't hinder my lifestyle, but I can say the last few times I've been out, it's been more one-on-one with my friends.

Participant 7

was in a First Aid course once, and we get to the end of the day, and I have to go and pick up my car and the guy's running late, and he says "right, you can do your test now, and it's quite alright for you to chat amongst each other" and I thought "what?" So I thought alright I'm going to do it quietly, and I could not concentrate with people talking, I just could not focus. And I tried moving away from them, and it didn't work, and in the end I just got up and said "this is fucked, this is really fucked" I was so pissed off. So I said "I'm going to go pick up my car otherwise I'm not going to get home tonight, and if you're still here when I get back, I will finish my test, if you're not here, I'm just going to have to forfeit, aren't I?" And I got to the car, came back, he was still there, I sat down, I finished that test within 5 minutes and I got 100%. But I could not focus with the sound of people talking.

Participant 8

For instance, we just went away for two weeks for my birthday, me and my husband, and it was full-on you know, and then when we got home I just wanted to be by

myself for a day, I just wanted to...not just rest physically, but almost debrief by myself, and I like to have time to think...I like to just sit and watch nature outside, and watch the clouds going by...

And the other thing I've noticed is that lately if I know I'm going to an event I tend to withdraw into myself before the event, it's almost like I'm preparing myself and gathering my resources and energy to explode onto the scene, and whilst I'm in it I'm fine, but then a wall comes, and it's like "that's it. Done. Let's get out of here now." How interesting! Another thing...I don't know if this is part of it...I'm super-sensitive to noise...and light, but especially noise...like if people are talking loud or I'm in a restaurant and there's so much going on, it's stressed me before...they've got the music, people are talking...Oh my god.

I even mute the ads when the TV is on, I cannot stand the noise of the ads!

We've got Foxtel and the same thing. And I watch when and what I want to watch, then I turn it off. No sitting there... just go with a purpose...that would explain also why when I have coaching clients, I'm exhausted after it. You know, I loved it, love doing it and am fine, but then afterwards I need to close my eyes for ten minutes and have a lie-down...

My favourite relative is my 75-year old aunt and she's just a gun...she still works part time, only just cut down from full time, she's a receptionist at an accounting firm, but I love her energy...she'll come down from Sydney and she'll be up with the birds and she's social, and I really admire a lot of qualities about her, one of the main qualities I admire is her stamina...I always wish that I had that stamina, I struggle to...for instance I have a full day...I'm up at 5 and I get to uni by 7.30 you know I do all the stuff, mornings I'm great, and as the day goes on, by 5-6 o'clock I'm like "I want to go to bed" and then I get crappy when I'm tired, it's like "leave me alone" I can't talk, I don't want to talk, I don't want noise, the solitude is...so maybe I should do a different tactic of going by myself to read a book for half an hour to get through that tired phase...I don't know...and I've always wanted that consistent stamina, like I'll be fine today, I'll go hammer and tongs for three days and then I collapse for a day. So maybe this goes some way to explaining how I function...

Yes, there was one morning where I said to my husband "Honey I just have to stay here and read" and I wanted to be alone and said "You go out" and I just needed a break from all the stimulation that was coming in...and I was thinking as a child, I was the laughing point of my family, but we'd go out and many a restaurant we had to leave because I would just start crying because I'd just be so tired...for no

reason...and that would have been because of all the stimulation, so I notice. I can hear all the sounds that are going on around me, and even shadow and light, the way light plays...I'll say to my husband "Can you hear that?" and he's like "no" and I'll be fascinated with the way the wind is blowing the leaves or something... it's all...wow! You've really made my day, because this is like a revelation, like okay, so I'm not getting tired necessarily because there's something physically wrong with my body...

Cause I've had blood tests and my iron levels are fine, and I'm like why do I get so suddenly...bam! It hits me like a truck, and coming back from [holiday] it's taken me a week and a half to get over the jet lag, the heat isn't helping, and probably as you say, just de-briefing from all the stimulation...we had 10 days of constant...oh that makes a lot of sense now...cause you start wondering what the hell's wrong?

Participant 11

I can go into some environments where there's a lot of people, so long as I'm in a good frame of mind when I first go in. if I'm feeling stressed or tired when I enter those environments, I'm a mess. That's when the misanthrope in me comes out. I don't like crowded environments. I would much prefer to go to a market than to a shopping mall, because the market feels open. I love traveling, but I much prefer to go to National Parks or rural country areas, than to cities. I know there's times when I have to do that but...And I can enjoy that like we were in Japan earlier this year, and I was wondering how I would go with the number of people, but I loved it, and it was calm, so I didn't feel...I guess that's it, I become heightened, I get emotionally heightened and I end up with a kind of sensory deprivation where I'm just shutting down

Participant 12

I also find myself emotionally sensitive, as you mentioned. So, I will easily cry and easily get a lot of emotions. Ah, sentimental, no matter if just watching a movie, or maybe with my family or friends. So, when I was younger, I was having a nickname called like 'Cry'...yeah, yeah. But I think for now sometimes I find I cannot control my tears, they're just coming out very naturally, the emotions...

Small circle of friends

Participant 3

I mean I don't really like to be around people too much but I have a close group of friends and they really help me get through life, I guess...

Participant 4

or quietly chatting with friends or stuff like that.

Participant 5

I talk with my friends, and get their advice, and then, also sometimes you just want to vent and tell someone what's happened

But it's not...it doesn't hinder my lifestyle, but I can say the last few times I've been out, it's been more one-on-one with my friends.

Participant 9

I do try to devote that kind of time on weekdays, then on weekends I like to spend time with my partner. So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing.

Participant 11

But it's something that's become more meaningful and I'm able to be more discerning. Not just about who I like or I don't really like, but who I spend my time with and doing what. So I've got 6 dear friends but I don't ever get them together

Participant 12

so I have friends but not many. I regard them as friends, we are quite close which I can always find help.

Solitude

Participant 1

I think definitely for me. The only way for me to wind down is to be alone and do nothing. Or play video games or something that doesn't require some kind of thinking. Although I really, really do enjoy catching up with friends, and I really do enjoy their company. But it does physically tire me, and there's sometimes...I find that

I have to stay at home, even if I go out, I still think "wow, I have to go out, I have to bring a bag, a wallet, and go out, and then I have to come home again. Then the solitude is something that's *very* important for me to maintain some of my sanity and my energy.

Participant 2

Yeah, I definitely can't deal with too much social events, like every weekend or something like that. I always feel like I need a bit of time to myself, even away from my partner, probably just in the next room, just to do my own thing. Yeah, so that's definitely something I feel like I need to do.

Participant 3

[solitude] Yes, extremely important, extremely. Cause I went overseas with my family last month, and after about 3 hours in the car I was like wanting to go off by myself...

Yeah, like you said, alone time is very important. I think my skin care routine, I like to put makeup on, and I also do cross-stitch...you can turn your brain off, and it's by myself!

Participant 4

Yeah, and its usually half an hour to an hour and sometimes when [partner] does come to bed at the same time as me, I don't sleep as well, I'll sometimes get up. He snores, and we have a snoring room which is the spare bedroom, that's where I go when he snores, but what I find is I'm more likely to go that space if he's got to go up early and he's come to bed the same time as me, and I haven't had that quiet time.

No, the type of work I do I design learning and development programs for organisations, like a lot of leadership stuff. A lot of my work is got my headphones on, and I'm really down and focused, and I can look up and go "Oh it's been two and a half hours and I haven't looked up. But people kind of...I think in learning and org dev roles, people know that you're not necessarily at your desk, so they don't expect emails all the time. I only look at my inbox in the morning and the evening, so I might look at emails in the morning and I don't even notice them for the rest of the day, so there's a bit of solitude in that as well. I walk a lot, I walk places, and I prefer walking or getting on the tram, because it's [unclear] so I'm walking on my own a lot so there's that

Participant 5

But it's about balance, and when you have people kind of pulling at you, you feel a bit drained, so, I know that I need to shut the door and I actually need "me" time, and I do those introspective activities like reading and things like that. So, I'm very big on okay, I've been out three times this week – as in catching up with people or I've had commitments – tonight I'm going to shut the door and it's just me. So yeah, I'm very big on balance.

Me time – making sure that I can shut the door. I have a very busy job, and I have a lot of friends in my circle, so I can tend to be drawn upon a lot when people, you know, need advice and things like that, so I know that if I shut the door as well, or every now and then, that helps me too.

Yes, and I'm thankful that I can do that, especially now that my son has moved out. This is the first time I've actually had 'me' time. I'm like, "wow! I've never had this" so yeah, it's crazy. But once I got my head around it, now I can just be spontaneous, and do things, you know, like take off on a date, and do things like that.

Participant 6

Yep. I actually realised I really like solitude and I really like...to be honest I love my husband he's got a very big personality, I've got a very big personality, Lucky we live in a big house I reckon...Sometimes I crave solitude... Just to have some time to sit and read That's one of my intentions for this year is to put time in the schedule to have quiet time just sitting down to read. And it's important because it's kind of regenerative isn't it?

Participant 7

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself.

Yes, I do a lot of things with myself, just by myself. Even go walking and things, you know. And I do meditations when I'm near nature. I learned through Ian White of the flower essences to say a prayer when you're out there and thank the angel of the place, you know, bless the spirits of earth, fire, water, air and it's amazing

And I started to think back and there was stuff I'd feel sometimes, I didn't know what the hell it was, or where it was coming from, it didn't feel like me, but I'd give it expression because I couldn't not. It'd be something really deep. And it wasn't until

later on reflection I thought I wonder how much of that stuff I mixed up. So I'd always work on myself as a way of working on the relationship, but it's been easier being alone, not financially, but that's easier to cope with too. Because I don't feel I'm carrying other people's stuff.

And I thought maybe it depends on whatever the cyclic phase is, but I do love both...connecting with people and spending time on my own. If you said to me "you can only have one or the other" I would take probably the time alone, because I can always step out. Although if it's just one OR the other...I just can't imagine being out there so much, I think I would get really overwhelmed if I did not have that time where I could just turn away. Like at the end of my shift I just have to walk out of the place, I know I've given everything I've got and I have to go and I will not allow myself to get pulled back. Yeah, so it's a hard one

Participant 8

And another thing, I would add to challenge is solitude, the time alone...oh gosh, I value that greatly, but I get interrupted all the time, like I'll read a book and my family come, and cause we're so talkative, they'll come and sit down and have a conversation with me, and I have to say to them "I'm reading a book, I'll talk to you in a minute" because I really value talking to them but I really value my solitude as well. So I'm actually struggling to get enough solitude...so that would be my two challenges at the moment

For instance, we just went away for two weeks for my birthday, me and my husband, and it was full-on you know, and then when we got home I just wanted to be by myself for a day, I just wanted to...not just rest physically, but almost debrief by myself, and I like to have time to think...I like to just sit and watch nature outside, and watch the clouds going by...

And I'm very conscious of it because I think in today's modern world people don't make enough time to do that, to just sit and let random thoughts come in your head...I love doing that, I love doing that. And I don't know if it's a form of meditation or debrief or whatever it is, I find that I really need it...

Participant 9

it's not really a conscious decision on my part, so what I'm actually doing is taking care of the family house, my parents' house cause they're working away and my siblings are...my sister is working [away] and my brother is overseas. So, I'm basically

stuck here, but it's not too bad I guess, because having the house to myself means that I can structure my day however I want. So what I do is just work in the day, and teach, and if I have time I go to the health club in the evening and then I balance all the other house stuff like cooking, around those things. So, solitude is like built into my everyday life, but I think it's good as well because I'm naturally fairly introverted as well, so if I'm around people too much and there's too much socialising I get really tired. And then I'm like "I need to shut down now"

I think that's been a big thing this year, like with the break-up...that happened when I was already alone, so my family were all on their ways and stuff, so I think being alone really helped me with that. With the depression and that, it was already helping me to be more aware of my emotions and with the break-up and being alone, I think that reinforced it even more. Also, what I neglected to mention was, with the solitude part, so I actually had a house-mate for a little bit of time, but I asked her to leave because it was too much for me. So, during that period of time as well it helped me to be more...I mean, I was already aware of my emotions but I guess it helped me learn how to express them more. Because normally I'm not the type of person who would be so forthcoming about them, so yeah, I think that helped as well.

Participant 10

Researcher: How often would you feel that you need to have some solitude, is it like every day you need to have some time to yourself?

Yeah, yep. A lot of times, yeah.

Participant 11

I'm a gregarious and outgoing person but Also a dead set introvert. I'm quite happy to discuss things And I'm open and direct but I find Social interactions exhausting. one on one I'm good But if it's a group I tire very quickly. I'm the kind of person that can live within herself. Like I'm quite happy to go away In the middle of the bush by myself and camp for a week with one of my dogs, and I'm in bliss. I mean that's Heaven but there's also a danger in that too. I could quite easily become a hermit [laughter]. But yeah, It is something that I've always done ever since I was a child And I find that it refuels me. And provide me with peace but also time for reflection, And introspection like what do I want where am I going.

So time on my own...If I don't get it I'm a ratbag.

I was always a real outsider at school and had been bullied quite a bit for it, because I would just prefer to sit there and read a book. And I had acquaintances that I would flit in and out with. There were always two girls, that if I wanted to reach out and have social contact, I could do that with them, but it wasn't uncommon for me to be

sitting alone reading a book. So I wasn't one of those girls who had a group of friends and was with them every recess and lunch time. And fortunately, they were really understanding. As I've got older, I've never really enjoyed group activities, so I much prefer one-on-one and having meaningful relationships. So, I don't consider that I have many friends, I have a few people that I consider to be friends, but even then I don't see them very often for a range of reasons. But that doesn't matter because when I do see them, we just reconnect.

Participant 12

But I kind of lacked that experience when I was very young, most of my time was pushed by my parents to just focus on study, so I have friends but not many. I regard them as friends, we are quite close which I can always find help. But I don't always want to do things in a group, or do something together, I want sometimes to have my own freedom or maybe my own space. So, from that perspective sometimes it's hard for my friends to know whether I want to join them this time, next time. Because they're always together and then I'm kind of like this time I will join and next time I don't.

Yes, that's really important. I would get really tired if I went out with friends every day during the week. I think it's really important that I stay with myself, get some work done, or just chilling with a movie, or listen to music. Yeah, so that's very important, I think. Because I think, in the past, I am a very shy introverted person, I don't always like to be in a very loud environment, and the Australian culture is more people are outgoing than introverted, so I'm kind of changing myself to adapt to the culture.

Spiritual wellbeing

Participant 1

spiritual dimension.

my relationship with God, and then also a sense of meaning in life.

spiritual wellbeing, I usually do prayer before I go to sleep, and to read the Bible – I find that relaxing a lot of the times. I catch up with a mentor every week, and we read the Bible together which is very good for my spiritual wellbeing and he's also a very close confidante, I'm very comfortable around him. So, every week I bring up something that's been happening in my life and I share that with him and it comforts me a lot. I'm very happy that I have all these connections where I can (*unclear*) to confide in each other and to support my wellbeing. I'm very happy with that.

Participant 7

I mean, my spirituality is like...I don't talk about it because I used to have friends who'd say "Oh Sal, I can't cope with it, stop it." Because for them it was all about everything tangible. But I have to have meaning. I'm not one of these people who can go out and just work for the sake of the dollar. That's just not...I'd be poorer than I can imagine, if it was just up to that. But I can look for meaning where I am, too. It's such an evolvement process, isn't it?

Yes, I do a lot of things with myself, just by myself. Even go walking and things, you know. And I do meditations when I'm near nature. I learned through the flower essences to say a prayer when you're out there and thank the angel of the place, you know, bless the spirits of earth, fire, water, air and it's amazing

Wellbeing enablers

Participant 1

I take care of my wellbeing on a daily basis

in terms of physical wellbeing I do some exercises before I go to sleep, and then for spiritual wellbeing, I usually do prayer before I go to sleep, and to read the Bible – I find that relaxing a lot of the times. I catch up with a mentor every week, and we read the Bible together which is very good for my spiritual wellbeing and he's also a very close confidante, I'm very comfortable around him. So, every week I bring up something that's been happening in my life and I share that with him and it comforts me a lot. I'm very happy that I have all these connections where I can (*unclear*) to confide in each other and to support my wellbeing. I'm very happy with that.

I haven't had an enduring crisis that's negatively impacted my wellbeing for an extended period of time, for quite a while, so I haven't had that recently. But that's something that happened quite frequently last year, but this year I've grown a lot more. Yeah, this year I think I've grown a lot more, I have a lot more methods to maintain some level wellbeing

self-compassion...not really, after hearing about it that's something I'm probably very bad at. Although I'm usually non-judgemental to myself, but I'm not compassionate, so to speak. I think compassion is a positive thing, and non-judgemental is neutral, I

think. I'm just neutral to myself. I think, something I find challenging with self-compassion is, every time I try to tell myself "you've been through some very difficult things" I just think of other people have, there are many people in this world currently and in the past who have many more difficult things, and I sometimes feel just a hint guilty if I tell myself that...try to tell myself that I've been through a lot and I should rest. Yep, so I think self-compassion is difficult for me because I see so many people who are *not* me who are far worse than myself, so I don't think I'm in a position to let myself off, basically. Yeah. So, I really agree on what you said before, it's easier to have compassion for other people than for myself.

I think definitely for me. The only way for me to wind down is to be alone and do nothing. Or play video games or something that doesn't require some kind of thinking. Although I really, really do enjoy catching up with friends, and I really do enjoy their company. But it does physically tire me, and there's sometimes...I find that I have to stay at home, even if I go out, I still think "wow, I have to go out, I have to bring a bag, a wallet, and go out, and then I have to come home again. Then the solitude is something that's very important for me to maintain some of my sanity and my energy.

I'm wondering if the speaking prayer is a kind of meditation? If so, then that's something I do daily, and it's something that I do occasionally during the day as well. I do find it calming before going to sleep. It's also alone time. I usually close my eyes and just focus on my internal thoughts. And I do find that relaxing for myself.

So, some strategies for emotional regulation I've learnt on the way, but I recently, over the past year, I began to tend to it more actively. When I realised that a particular negative emotion like anger or sadness or stress is building up within myself, I usually delay it. I delay it by telling myself I shouldn't make a judgement right now, that I'm stressed or angry... I should delay this feeling until later and see if they're still present, then I will tend to it. A lot of times, I think, when stress and anger or sadness, grief builds up, it's in the spur of the moment and it can really make you engrossed in that, so what I usually do is take a bit of time to – not to ignore it – but to test whether it's permanent so I try not to think about it for a few hours. If it happens during the day I'll just delay it to the afternoon, or at night in the evening. If it's still present I will tend to it and see "why do I feel this way" "do I have any justification for feeling this way". If there's something that's actually bad has happened. And I try to... if it's work related stress I try to break it down to tasks, I break it down to a small task and I stand back a bit and analyse those tasks, and estimate how long they would take, and usually I find out that it's something

enlarged in my mind... in reality it wouldn't actually take that much time for that, and if I use my time while I can, I comfortably finish the task. That usually helps with task-related stresses. If it's relational, again I usually just give it time, a bit more time this time, a bit more time, like a week or so and then try to re-establish some kind of communication, say "how're you doing, catch up over coffee?" and so when I ever face negative stress and emotion I usually give it a bit of time. And I find that strategy to be particularly useful for me.

So I think having a sense of meaning and purpose is one of the most important things. I remember in my high school years, not having a meaning or purpose, or lacking it, has created a lot of significant distress for me. It caused me to have very depressed mood and be very, very, very down. And I think the importance of having meaning in life is so important to me because it can influence a lot of the actions that I take, for example, I am studying psychology and philosophy because the question of the meaning of and purpose of life is so important and I want to study these two disciplines to have their insights into the question, and I have done lots of reading of philosophical texts on what different philosophers think meaning of life and I'm really into reading literature on those topics. Because I think my family isn't religious, and my conversion and decision to practice Christianity, I think, is also very central to the idea of having a meaning, an overarching meaning. I don't think that I can impose this meaning in Christianity on everyone else, but for my personal search for meaning I think my religion is a satisfactory and adequate provider of meaning and purpose in my life.

I think it's interesting to know that I score highly on this trait, but practically I don't think it would change too much, because I think I already have a good routine in place to take care of myself to regulate how I feel. And just another thing is that I don't think it will help me or change or help me establish a plan, just because I dislike plans, because I just like to be free-flowing...

Yes spontaneous and do things as they come up, and I think having a routine or a plan, I feel very restricted by that. I probably won't establish a concrete plan or routine but there are some things that I do, daily, and regularly such as prayer, and such as exercise. I think knowing that I score highly on this trait will probably alert me to take care of myself more, to recognise that I am more sensitive to stimuli and things than other people and this will help me to be more mindful of how I'm feeling

I'd say every day I try to do something...it's exercise or coming home and reading a book to kind of just escape a bit of work and everything else. So, I'd say every day I try to do something.

in the last five years I've become a lot more aware of how stress affects me, and just noticing when I'm stressed, whereas before it was a bit too late to do anything. So, now I'm a bit more aware of the feelings in my body and things like that of when things are getting a bit too much

I do proactively take the time now to do something. Sometimes it's just like to take a bath or something like that to just relax and unwind. So, I'm a lot more aware, physically, the sensations of stress in my body.

Um, probably not as much as other things, no. Something I probably should do more of, yeah, but it's not like the top thing I do.

Yeah, I definitely can't deal with too much social events, like every weekend or something like that. I always feel like I need a bit of time to myself, even away from my partner, probably just in the next room, just to do my own thing. Yeah, so that's definitely something I feel like I need to do.

Yeah I do meditate, not every day, like that's one of my goals to be disciplined and do it every day, but I tend to do it more when I'm stressed or anxious. But, the idea is that I want to do it every day.

Okay yeah, so, having that self-talk like "this will pass" and "it's just a stressful time" or "it'll be okay". Everyone has these moments, and it's not catastrophising it like I used to, but just being a bit more comfortable sitting with it and thinking it'll pass and it'll work out.

[meaning] Yeah that's very important to me. Definitely.

I think when I read a bit more about it, cause I thought "this sounds a bit like me" I sort of recognised a lot of things and I always thought a lot of things associated with that trait were negative, and I've learnt that there's positive things to it, so that gave me that recognition. Cause I've always gone through life feeling like I'm a bit more sensitive than others, maybe I cry a lot more easily, but then by understanding it I

learnt to recognise that it has positive qualities as well that can be good, so I've learnt to accept that about myself a bit more, and be more comfortable with it.

Yeah, cause I've always felt I'm quiet and shy as a child, cause I'm an only child, never had any family, I was very distant from my mother, so I didn't have that kind of supportive relationship, so, I've always thought that was why I've been shy and always wanting to please others, because I didn't have that validation cause I didn't get that from my mum. So to kind of be aware that it's also a personality trait that might be innate, it's kind of interesting.

Mm, yeah, I can definitely relate to that, I wouldn't say I've suffered depression but I do have issues with anxiety, and I think I always have but I never kind of realised them until the last five years or so. I've found personally it's having that awareness, this is the way you are, and you're anxious and that's kind of the way to overcome a lot of issues and improve your wellbeing. So, if I just continued and got stressed and didn't take time to care for myself or do some of that, I think it would, the anxiety and stress would just eat me up. So, I think that's key, is just having that knowledge – at least for me – that knowledge and awareness has been really important. And personally for me, my partner has been really important in that awareness because he's quite insightful and also being, I guess, similar to me but different, has really helped improve my wellbeing. Especially in the last couple of years, so I think that's been really good.

Participant 3

[supportive relationships and friendships] Yes I think that's important as well, that would be my maybe number 2 or 3... I mean I don't really like to be around people too much but I have a close group of friends and they really help me get through life, I guess...

Self-acceptance I reckon that would be up near the top, cause if you're hard on yourself all the time then you can never not be stressed, I guess.

In terms of self-acceptance? Well when I was a teenager, it was a bit hard, and it was teenage stuff, and I found body positivity blogs and Instagram accounts and stuff, and I got into feminism and accepting yourself and all that stuff and it really helped.

Positive relationships, I guess that's a bit hard to gauge...I guess if you come away from hanging out with your friends and you feel better about yourself, then you know they're satisfying interactions, I guess.

being able to forgive myself for mistakes. I'm quite hard on myself and I'm very perfectionistic, and that's something too I can forgive myself for stuff...

[solitude] Yes, extremely important, extremely. Cause I went overseas with my family last month, and after about 3 hours in the car I was like wanting to go off by myself...

[meditation] I have tried in the past, but I'm not very good at it. I guess I do a lot of sitting down or lying down and doing nothing, I guess I'm still thinking, so I'm not really emptying my mind or whatever meditation is...

I think right now, like having a sense of meaning is lower, because I did honours in neuroscience and I really loved neuroscience, and I wanted to become a researcher and discover new things about the brain, and that was my sense of meaning, and that was so strong, but then I did honours and it killed my passion,

...so what's more important to me is getting a stable job and living a normal life. Because I do really want a house, and I want a lot of cats, and that's what I'm working towards...I guess that's long-term, but shorter term, I'm wanting to achieve high grades and do well...

Yeah, like you said, alone time is very important. I think my skin care routine, I like to put makeup on and I also do cross-stitch...you can turn your brain off, and it's by myself!

Participant 4

Yeah. It's an interesting one, because probably it's changed over the years. I used to think that wellbeing was like a set thing, it was probably based on what I thought things should be like, but as I've gotten more comfortable with myself I think wellbeing is about how I'm feeling inside myself. And, I think for me, there's a lot of self-acceptance in wellbeing. You know, wellbeing isn't about having lots of friends and going to parties, which is kind of what I thought I had to have, to be happy, but now it's also about sitting with a good book or quietly chatting with friends or stuff like that. For me it's less exuberant happiness, and more the kind of contented, softer, and being very comfortable in my space and with myself.

Yes, definitely authentic, and I think as well that sense of meaning, you know. Once I was able to find a real sense of meaning in the work that I'm doing, and things like that, was really important as well. So much more on the eudaimonic than the hedonic

I think I'm really happy with certain aspects of my wellbeing and then other aspects of my wellbeing, I'm just getting them sorted and getting to the bottom of a few health issues that I've had, and I think that's really going to take it to that next kind of level. Because one part that's really important for my wellbeing is a run, and because I've been sick quite a lot, I haven't been running, so I've missed that aspect. As much as I try to do meditation, it's just not the same.

Yeah, yeah, probably also not dealing with depression and anxiety. So, I've had depression and anxiety in the past and it's really quite stable at the moment. And I'm pretty good at identifying warning signs, and things like that, of when things might not be going so well. And I'm much better at dealing with those warning signs early. So that's probably another aspect of my wellbeing that's really good at the moment.

And it felt a bit easier for me to understand my self-protectiveness, in that's a little bit easier, so it's good.

I think I mentioned – that when I was doing the survey, my husband looked over my shoulder at one of the questions, and said "Nah, you're way higher! I've never met anyone who startles as easily as you do." And I went "Isn't everyone like this?" "No!" [laughter]

probably daily. It probably seems like a really weird thing, so, [partner] and I – I'm probably more of an early riser, and go to bed earlier, and he's a little bit the other way. And so he sometimes goes to bed early because he cycles, so he'll get up really early and go for a bike ride, but generally he stays up a bit later, he needs a little bit less sleep than I do, as well, so there's a period of time when I go to bed, but I'm not sleeping, but I'll listen to an audiobook, usually something that is completely outside of work and everything. And in particular if I've got a lot on, I'll choose a book – I'll often use science-fiction, because it's SO far outside and I get absorbed in a different universe, and that can be a really nice way to just switch my brain off, and have alone time, just before I go to sleep. And I find that really beneficial. And because it's an audiobook it takes away the eye....

Three times a week, three or four times a week. And I still try and, even if I'm not running, I take the long way walking and walk through the park, or something. So, [the city's] got great parks, and so I always try and – every morning – walk through parkland. Whether it's walking to work or running. I was thinking I'm going to start running in the next couple of weeks, and I had to run a few errands in the city, and I'll walk through the parks, and it's going to take me an hour longer, but for me, it's being alone, out in nature...So, that's really important, and we have beautiful parks, and I live quite near the [public gardens] and it's just lovely. And when I run, I often go up to the [creek] and that's wonderful, so...pretty lucky.

I don't do it every day, I particularly do it if I'm between audiobooks, or if I know mentally that...I'd like to more of it...I have an app called "Buddhify" and it's 'on the go' mindfulness, so if I'm walking through a park – and now I just kind of do it anyway – and it'll be like 'walking the streets' or 'being on public transport' or 'taking a break from work' and it will have one for different things. And they're usually short, less than ten minutes long, and I like them because they're very focused on where you're at, right at that moment. Um, I'd like to get better at going into a state of mindfulness, that is deliberate. Like, I have a friend who's "I've got to have a sit, I've got to [unclear]" and I'd like to be able to do that, but I feel like for me, what Buddhify does is, it says you don't have to do that, you can be mindful wherever you're at, and I find that really comforting to have that, even available, as well. So, if I'm finding it hard to deal with an environment, then I can just take eight minutes, and it's out and I go "right, okay". I think it's been really useful, like with the park, even when I'm not listening to the app, I'm still looking up at the trees, and being mindful...

[self-compassion] That's been my...I write a weekly blog and send it to friends and they will attest that I have every couple of months I'll come back to self-compassion. It's something that I have struggled with but I think that I'm getting better at, and I think the more you dig in to self-compassion around it being...and there's different aspects...but it's not just about accepting and going "yeah, whatever" but it's about "well I can be compassionate" that's where I am at the moment, but there's also this sense of "How do I deal with this better next time, what can I learn?" and I really love that aspect of it. The other aspect of it that I really like is how would you treat a friend? And I'm probably a very compassionate friend that people go to, if they've got an issue, so I kind of go, "Right, if [friend] had this problem, what could I do, what could I say" so I find that aspect of self-compassion really good as well.

[solitude] Yeah, and it's usually half an hour to an hour and sometimes when [partner] does come to bed at the same time as me, I don't sleep as well, I'll sometimes get up.

He snores, and we have a snoring room which is the spare bedroom, that's where I go when he snores, but what I find is I'm more likely to go that space if he's got to go up early and he's come to bed the same time as me, and I haven't had that quiet time.

No, the type of work I do I design learning and development programs for organisations, like a lot of leadership stuff. A lot of my work is got my headphones on, and I'm really down and focused, and I can look up and go "Oh it's been two and a half hours and I haven't looked up. But people kind of...I think in learning and org dev roles, people know that you're not necessarily at your desk, so they don't expect emails all the time. I only look at my inbox in the morning and the evening, so I might look at emails in the morning and I don't even notice them for the rest of the day, so there's a bit of solitude in that as well. I walk a lot, I walk places, and I prefer walking to getting on the tram, because it's [unclear] so I'm walking on my own a lot so there's that

A few years ago, I had a manager that was really supportive, and he showed me this thing which is $E + R = O$ which is Event + the response gives you the Outcome. And what he said was, "What we want to get people doing is thinking what's the outcome we want, then think of the response" so we're flipping it, instead of going E R O we're going Event, thinking Outcome, and then what's the response. Choose the response that's going to give you the outcome you want. And I've never forgotten that and it's really hard, but the more I practice it the better I get at it and even if you're really panicking inside, you can do that cognitive step of "What do I want to happen here" this takes it out of that hyper...and having that equation helpful, it's logical. And I build it now into all my training programs for leaders.

[meaning] Yeah, there was a period in my life where I really struggled with that, and I thought well neither of those careers are in the direction I want. I went and saw a career counsellor and she thought learning, design and particularly when I first went into learning design it was multimedia, my film and TV background really helped with that, and it's but I did get to a point where I was like I didn't feel this sense of meaning in it, and I did this very deliberate exercise of writing down a personal meaning statement, why I do what I do, and then that really helped. So, I'm in organisational development and I develop leaders because when people have good leadership, they can bring their best selves to work, and do their best work. And that's why I do what I do, and I feel really clear about that, cause that's aligned with my meaning statement. So, meaning for me, is really important.

So I think flow is a big part...you know, having that flow, is a big part of what I enjoy about my work, and I can get into that really deep flow state, whether it's writing for

hours without being interrupted, and I think having a bit of flow, but having meaning as well....So, when I was working in creative industries, I had a lot more flow, but it was all about getting into that flow state and having that, but then when I moved into the work that I do now, I don't quite have as much but I still work hard to find moments within it, and times for it throughout the week. When I've got my headphones on, and getting in, and having the meaning but also making space for flow...

Yeah, although I do find myself sometimes going I want, maybe this is a bit like meditation, but sometimes I'm wanting just pure flow, like, and it's not to do with my work, and that's really nice too, when you're in the creative space and sometimes I'll write for a few hours and [unclear], and it's quirky and it's weird, and there's no audience. So, I think there's the synergism but there's also it's nice when they have a separate existence.

I think it has, I think that going to bed ritual, having that time and now I understand, it kind of happened accidentally because we have different modes of sleep, but now I protect it, if that makes sense? So, it's yeah, definitely, I think the other thing as well is that...I didn't do a lot of reading about high sensitivity, but knowing that it's sometimes how I'm feeling is due to the higher sensitivity and it'll pass, and it's natural, kind of then it's helped make me separate out the anxiety from sensitivity. And then, it's reduced...if I feel myself getting anxious then I'm forward thinking and "Am I going into a period of anxiety and maybe get depressed" and I go now "No it's just high sensitivity" and I don't have that anxiety about that.

but then I finished, and then I looked it up and he goes, and it's actually helped him understand, which has been really helpful. He talks non-stop...

So, he just verbalises everything, which is great in some ways cause you're never wondering what is he thinking, but also it's like this noisy environment all the time, so he's kind of gone "Oh, you know when I'm all like this, that's kind of maybe frustrating" and I'm like "That's why I put my headphones in" So, it's kind of helped us in our relationship...

Participant 5

Yeah, sure! I'm really big on wellbeing, it's about mindfulness, and it's about getting balance in my life. I've learnt the hard way (I guess we all do) that if I feel out of balance that I don't have a good day.

I have an office job five days a week, and I've got a management role, so my wellbeing is every lunch time I go for a walk, so that's my balance, and I'll meet with a friend

often we'll have a chat and a walk so your mental health – chatting, and you can vent as well – and you have your exercise and then you come back, and that's a really big one for me. So, exercise is huge.

Last night I went to – would you believe – cat meditation at a rescue cat place. So that was fun.

Another one that I love is to crank the music up and dance in my lounge room, that's a big one. So, I know that these are the things that make me happy and I'll put it on

And also, just calling a friend and having a good chat/yak to a friend.

But it's about balance, and when you have people kind of pulling at you, you feel a bit drained, so, I know that I need to shut the door and I actually need "me" time, and I do those introspective activities like reading and things like that. So, I'm very big on okay, I've been out three times this week – as in catching up with people or I've had commitments – tonight I'm going to shut the door and it's just me. So yeah, I'm very big on balance.

Naturally, I'm a very positive person, and I'm always trying to be a happy person, so even if I'm tired or grumpy, I'll try and not let it sort of... I'll try not to snap at people. But today I'm just feeling a bit – you know, the grey weather, the rain... But generally, I'm actually really good, I feel really blessed.

one of the things that make me happy is I have a very fulfilling job that I really enjoy going to. I have a great team, I'm the manager there so I feel like I'm in a very supportive environment, and I'm also supportive in turn of my staff and get a kick out of being a mentor and things like that. That is a great joy. And I feel really balanced with my exercise, and my time out, and things like that

Music's a big part of my life too.

Me time – making sure that I can shut the door. I have a very busy job, and I have a lot of friends in my circle, so I can tend to be drawn upon a lot when people, you

know, need advice and things like that, so I know that if I shut the door as well, or every now and then, that helps me too.

Every day. At the end of the day, after dinner, if I haven't gone for a walk with daylight saving, I'll put the music on as a way to just unwind. And every day I will go for a walk. So, yeah, that's my balance.

Yes. I talk with my friends, and get their advice, and then, also sometimes you just want to vent and tell someone what's happened and they'll *(unclear)* and then what I'll do is, I'll have to touch base with my son regularly, and hear from him that he's okay and everything's okay. And once I've heard from him, then I'm okay.

[self-compassion] Oh massively important! And I don't practice it as much as I should. That's one area that I really do need to work on, because I think a lot of us can be hard on ourselves. But that's one area I probably need to work on, definitely.

Yes, and I'm thankful that I can do that, especially now that my son has moved out. This is the first time I've actually had 'me' time. I'm like, "wow! I've never had this" so yeah, it's crazy. But once I got my head around it, now I can just be spontaneous, and do things, you know, like take off on a date, and do things like that.

[meditation] Yes, I did last, went to a class. But also, I try and do it when I'm stressed, I try and do a bit of an internal meditation. It doesn't take too long, but it's enough...it's a particular exercise that clears your chakras. So I breathe in, seven deep breaths, to go through all my chakras. So, if I do that exercise for like, a couple of minutes, I find that's enough to just ground me. But I do more mindfulness, rather than meditating. Like, I'll go out and notice the tree – I'll actually touch the tree.

[meaning] Crucial. Crucial, because I'm driven by...yeah, if I don't have meaning in what I do, it doesn't really drive me. So, I feel like I do contribute at work greatly, and I'm valued, so that's amazing, but also I like to try and do a bit of volunteer work and things like that to add and help. I kind of help with charities, and fundraising, as in donating things like that. I'm very big on social justice and if I can do *(unclear)* I'll do it. Meaning is very important.

It's all about learning how to make a graceful exit, isn't it? Like it's only just got started, and I'm like...what do I say...I've got somewhere else to be? I don't know, it's hard...In the end I find that if I say no at the start, rather than go for a bit, but that's

not fair on me either, or them...do you know what I mean? Sometimes, it's like balancing it. But it's not...it doesn't hinder my lifestyle, but I can say the last few times I've been out, it's been more one-on-one with my friends.

Participant 6

I use the PERMAH framework. I think wellbeing is incredibly important because I've been in a position where I've had poor wellbeing, a little bit of anxiety, and I've come to understand why. I feel really excited because I actively every day work on my wellbeing – I take the dogs for a walk, and most days I do yoga in the morning and I feel so much better when I do that. And I understand about moving the body, and Bessel van der Kolk's work, so I feel privileged that I know the pathways that work for me, and I know the dosages on different days, and also because we have the two dogs to walk twice a day. So, I know that positive relationships are important, and I've made new friends in recent years and I know how to seek out high quality connections. So I know on a neurobiological level how important the dogs are for me and my husband

So for me, I experience a lot of positive emotion, one of my highest strengths is humour, and the second is prudence, so that feels like having one foot on the accelerator and one foot on the brake – but I've learnt to handle that. Engagement – I feel like I'm in a state of flow quite often – particularly when I'm volunteering

Relationships – I've learned more about that and compassion (I'll talk more about that later), but I've learned to let go of certain relationships that don't improve my wellbeing, and in fact detract from my wellbeing. And in the past I would've felt guilty about that but now I realise that's self-care. And I think at my age I'm really becoming more 'boundaried', and I'm excited about the fact that it's like return on investment, in terms of resources and energy and "which walls am I going to put my ladder up against?"

Like two nights ago I took two of my nieces out for their Christmas present and last night I took another niece out – experiencing together is so wonderful. Other than giving just a physical gift and knowing what is lasting and building relationships is so important – otherwise I wouldn't see them. Meaning – I feel like I'm privileged to know that after a long time to knowing what my meaning is – and that's to be able to serve other people

And achievement – happily I've achieved more than I ever thought I would – you know

I just know for me – and being HSP and being prone to a little bit of anxiety – it would not be good for my wellbeing and it would not be good for my relationship with my husband, and I'm not prepared to compromise. If I was thirty, I would say "Absolutely yes" but I can benefit so many people – hundreds of people, thousands of people – doing what I'm doing so I'm excited about that. Health – health's very important because when I sit on our cheap couch I get a sore back and I have to go to the physio, so finally we're getting a good couch. Hopefully I won't have to go to the physio, but I know that, and I aim for, and strive for excellent health. I strive for flourishing – not in a perfectionistic way – but I feel excited because I know the pathways and I know what works and what doesn't work. And I'm so grateful for that.

But I feel so excited because I feel like if I take care of my own wellbeing, I could be so supportive to other people, or at least direct them to different resources.

And so what I've realised through Bessel van de Kolk's work and he's talking about movement, I think yoga and walking is incredibly important for me. So I really want to walk every day...I mean if I'm busy and I don't get to walk one day I can survive, but my days with walking and yoga are so much better.

Yes, that's a good question. I think it's about looking at where I am now and looking at where I was...like a personal best. And also I think I have a fairly good ability to self-evaluate and self-awareness and it's about how I feel, and I also know that I'm being a little bit more assertive with my mother and other people, and I think that's about being more boundaried. And there is a little bit of push-back, but I know that it's important for me to do that because I know I have been too passive, so when people work in a very male environment, they can become quite direct/brutal in a male, blokey environment, and I think women are far more nuanced and I think HSPs are even more nuanced again.

And I'm kind of rolling that out to all friendships and relationships, because I think in the past I've felt quite wounded and...But also to check in with myself and ask "Hey are you being a little bit too sensitive? Maybe you are, and that wasn't their intent. Let it go" you know what I mean? When you're just having relationships with people you don't see that often, it's not a big deal, but when it's someone you live with or you see all the time...

Yes self-compassion more and more it really works for me I use Kristin Neff's. The more I do it the more it works, yep.

Yep. I actually realised I really like solitude and I really like...to be honest I love my husband he's got a very big personality, I've got a very big personality, Lucky we live in a big house I reckon...Sometimes I crave solitude... Just to have some time to sit and read That's one of my intentions for this year is to put time in the schedule to have quiet time just sitting down to read. And it's important because it's kind of regenerative isn't it?

And I realised I got a bit triggered at my family of origin at Christmas and what I realised would have been good was to pull the car over, go for a little walk with the dogs to get rid of all that unease. God to know, good to know. And solitude, I agree is regenerative.

Meaning is enormous to me and I am so thrilled that I have reached this point in my life. Building wellbeing through savouring and I know it works. Because I've been able to do it over and over with different sets of people, whether it's with a 5-year old preppie, or a tricky mother, and everyone in between

Yes, and what I teach primary school kids is their invisible jacket with their zippy pockets...they have their tips and tools in their zippy pockets what works for them...it's customised, it's different for the individual, and it's different on a different day and a different dosage....they know what works. And that's exciting too because I feel like it gives you confidence to go into almost any situation and you know you've got what you need...

The big thing that you said... focus on...savouring, savouring is light, it's much lighter than mindfulness for example...we're still being realistic but we're zeroing in, and it's so powerful and it's much safer, and I love teaching the kids that and it seems to work very well. And savouring into the future, savouring into the past...what was the best thing about getting up this morning...having breakfast, seeing your friends at school...

Participant 7

I have found in terms of wellbeing, where I'm in a situation where I'm helping others, it's like I move into a different zone. It's beautiful. It's like, even with my work in aged care...which I'm going to finish in a couple of weeks...it's just been really meaningful to me to just be able to look people in the eye and say without saying as much in words...." I see you". You know, and just acknowledge them and their presence, and I find that I get such a beautiful response from them, you know? That's the most

meaningful thing to me about work. But I've been a fully accredited massage therapist for so long, that I'm used to focusing in on the client. So that's sort of, in a way very easy for me. But there's no denying that sense of "this is what I'm here for" when I actually am helpful, and I can see the response in people, be it a physical thing if I'm massaging, because I try and do more than the job. I try and soothe their spirit. It's that thing...I don't know what it is...I have this incredible need to nurture.

like with friends...I don't have that, although I've got friends that I've had for forty-odd years. I keep very select people in my life, and that's...if they continue to respond and not leave it all up to me to make the contact.

I like that sense of "I'm okay with myself and with the world"

Yes, it is important. I'm one of these people who's often been the helper, and when I've needed help it's been really challenging for me to pick up the phone and ask for help. But the weird thing about that is, when I have been in that situation, I can make 6 calls and not get one answer. And then I sit down and have a cry. And I think "That's okay, you can cry, you can do whatever you like."

[meaning] Oh yeah, yeah! I mean, my spirituality is like...I don't talk about it because I used to have friends who'd say "I can't cope with it, stop it." Because for them it was all about everything tangible. But I have to have meaning. I'm not one of these people who can go out and just work for the sake of the dollar. That's just not...I'd be poorer than I can imagine, if it was just up to that. But I can look for meaning where I am, too. It's such an evolvment process, isn't it?

Even if it's just closing the door and just being with myself. And the way I eat...I make sure I eat highly nutritious food and I'll take the time to prepare for myself, you know. I've had a couple of instances the last few weeks, and I've been preparing the food and I do "Yes, you've got this in here, and that can help you, and look at you go girl! This is your kitchen and you can do whatever you like!" And I think who's this? It's just my younger me going "Wow, look at you now!" But I'm not making it less than I would, making the meal less than I would for somebody else. Because once I used to prioritise others, but now...for a long time I've told people "Talk to yourself as if you were your best friend. Like, think about what you'd say to your best friend, and say it to yourself." And I've been trying to do that with myself, treat myself the way I'd treat somebody I love. So, I try and approach that, and it's been challenging at work, because they request me to put in extra time and things, and I go "No, you're not going to do this."

Only until I get away and I go and spend time with my kids because we have such open relationships, I've never said to them that there's anything that they couldn't talk about with me. And I've been really open with them about my own life experience, so please if you want to know about something do ask, because I'll find out if I don't have the information. And my kids are just so beautiful! They hear me a lot of the time, you know and that is really valuable to me.

If I think I've said something to somebody despite what I mean, if I feel they've taken it wrongly, I can sense that, and I go oh, they're bothered, they've misinterpreted what I've said. And then it becomes really important for me to approach them, and say I just wanted to clarify that this is what I meant and I'm sorry if you took it any other way or if it came across as harsh. There was once a time I was so proud that there was no way I would apologise, unless I knew that I was in the wrong. Now sorry trips out of my mouth so easily, it's like "I'm sorry, I've upset you, I didn't mean to do that" so I find it really easy to apologise. I don't feel I've got to take back what I've said, but just to apologise for the impact that I've had that was not my intention. Even though sometimes it's got a lot to do with them, you know, so it's not going to hurt me to say I'm sorry.

A meditative discipline is good, mine is tai chi. And I haven't been doing that, but there's no denying the difference in my sense of wellbeing when I do that, and it's very rooted in meditation and that's fairly important too

Yes, I do a lot of things with myself, just by myself. Even go walking and things, you know. And I do meditations when I'm near nature. I learned through Ian White of the flower essences to say a prayer when you're out there and thank the angel of the place, you know, bless the spirits of earth, fire, water, air and it's amazing

And I started to think back and wondered how much of that I did with my husband, there was stuff I'd feel sometimes, I didn't know what the hell it was, or where it was coming from, it didn't feel like me, but I'd give it expression because I couldn't not. It'd be something really deep. And it wasn't until later on reflection I thought I wonder how much of that stuff I mixed up. So I'd always work on myself as a way of working on the relationship, but it's been easier being alone, not financially, but that's easier to cope with too. Because I don't feel I'm carrying other people's stuff.

And I thought maybe it depends on whatever the cyclic phase is, but I do love both...connecting with people and spending time on my own. If you said to me "you

can only have one or the other" I would take probably the time alone, because I can always step out. Although if it's just one OR the other...I just can't imagine being out there so much, I think I would get really overwhelmed if I did not have that time where I could just turn away. Like at the end of my shift I just have to walk out of the place, I know I've given everything I've got and I have to go and I will not allow myself to get pulled back. Yeah, so it's a hard one

Participant 8

Whether it be reading, or I only read non-fiction, so reading something that takes care of the growth-personal development, to going for a walk, or doing my money (I have a budget that I use), through to making sure that I talk to the family making sure I'm staying connected with family and messaging friends, so...I don't know, my kind of model is balanced, it's all about balance, something to slide behind... I was so busy last year I slacked off on having coffees with friends and let that slide a little lower, but in general I am aware of doing a little bit every day with each of those segments, it all kind of ticking along, rather than if I focus solely on one segment, then one segment is completely gone to hell

but more motivated by the possibilities of the future, I'm very goal orientated. So I set myself goals whether it be sticking to a budget, or in uni, or business or even weight, my weight...things like that...I guess that's how I know there's changes have occurred. But I guess with relationships it's a bit trickier, I guess I judge it by the frequency of our interactions. So I'm very big on communicating daily with family, like we sit down and we chat for ages, so that's how I kind of know things are going well with the relationship. I put in the effort, with friends as well, how frequently we have a coffee or chat on the phone, that's probably how I measure it.

And another thing, I would add to challenge is solitude, the time alone...oh gosh, I value that greatly, but I get interrupted all the time, like I'll read a book and my family come, and cause we're so talkative, they'll come and sit down and have a conversation with me, and I have to say to them "I'm reading a book, I'll talk to you in a minute" because I really value talking to them but I really value my solitude as well. So I'm actually struggling to get enough solitude...so that would be my two challenges at the moment

[self-compassion] Definitely, definitely. That's really high on my radar...it's something I've had to practice and it's a work in progress...

I'm very conscious of the language that I use, so I've gotten rid of the word "should" you know that just makes me feel crap, so I'm very conscious of the language I use and also with self-compassion I guess also being more patient with myself...I'm like the tortoise, I'm not always the quickest in the room to pick up concepts or whatever, but once I get it, it's there for life kind of thing. For instance, I'm learning Spanish, but I put in a lot of work to get it in there, sometimes if I compare myself with my classmates, they're on it and they're rattling off phrases and I go "Oh, oh, what's going on?" I'm learning to say to myself "Look just wait a minute, it's just different learning styles, this is just the way I learn, I'll get it, I just have to put in maybe a bit more work than them, I'm a tortoise, and ever since I associated with the animal, I find it's better, not such a negative connotation more a positive funny thing, like "I'm a tortoise, I'll get there"

For instance, we just went away for two weeks for my birthday, me and my husband, and it was full-on you know, and then when we got home I just wanted to be by myself for a day, I just wanted to...not just rest physically, but almost debrief by myself, and I like to have time to think...I like to just sit and watch nature outside, and watch the clouds going by...

And I'm very conscious of it because I think in today's modern world people don't make enough time to do that, to just sit and let random thoughts come in your head...I love doing that, I love doing that. And I don't know if it's a form of meditation or debrief or whatever it is, I find that I really need it...

I've gone to a couple of Buddhist meetings and it's always been on my list to learn how to do it, but I would say my kind of form of it would be walking...walking in nature, or sitting in nature but it has to be in nature, it doesn't work in a room or wherever, it has to be outside in nature, definitely.

And they opened a new track through the bush, and it's just lovely to walk through and I just get lost in there, and looking at the way the leaves move on the trees and so yeah, I don't know if that's a form of meditation, but it works for me...

I think definitely in relation to relationships it's definitely improved it. It's ironic, because my ex-husband, he was the calm one and I was kind of the [gesturing] and now my new husband, he's the [gesturing] one, and I'm the calm one! I'm the one who is always the calm voice of reason when he's jumping up and down, and I'm going "Well let's just think about this...what we're going to do about it..." So definitely in relationships, and also in relation to myself...self-compassion...definitely

in relation to that as well. So I would say definitely it's helped improved my wellbeing, definitely.

[meaning] Oh my gosh, yes, yes, yes! This will be my overarching thing, as in meaning to my life...when I was eighteen I went to uni but I dropped out because of depression, and then I had children... and I always wanted to go back to university but I wanted to do it for a reason, not just to get the piece of paper, to do it at the right time

and especially in the first year of uni, I'm surrounded by the youth environment, and I'm thinking "oh my God, it's too late for me, it's too late" Gradually I'm starting to come to terms with that..."well wait a minute, I've still got a lot to offer and..." so that's gradually calmed down in my head, but I'm so driven with the idea and the conviction that I can help people and I want to help people. I've got a plan, it's very clear what my plan is, and I want to get in and help people in workplaces,

so that kind of thing...so that's my meaning, that gives me my drive...so when I say that's the overarching thing, it is, because it determines in my health...like if you're going to have stamina to get through your studies and develop a career, I need to look after my health, I'm getting older...so it determines that, it determines my relationships because I have a very supportive husband that's supportive of me going through uni, so all those kind of things...my sense of meaning in life is thinking about this

Participant 9

because I'm doing a thesis at the moment, so the stress levels are always up and down. Yeah, but what I'm thinking of (because I teach) so what I'm thinking is cutting down

And also, hopefully that will give me more time for myself to be able to do things that I want to do, and not feel like I'm really stressed out and having to manage my time all the time – that kind of thing. But I would say it's pretty good at the moment.

So, I like to embroider and crochet and knit and stuff like that, and I find that really helps me balancing against all the reading that I have to do for the thesis. So, I try to make sure that I can [unclear] every night, so maybe 10pm or something, I shut down the computer and then just like wind down, go to bed, and then I just pick whatever I feel like doing, so whether it's crochet or embroidery or whatever. And then, maybe do that for half an hour to forty-five minutes, and then go to sleep. I do try to devote

that kind of time on weekdays, then on weekends I like to spend time with my partner. So, we decide on Friday night what we're going to do on the weekend, kind of thing. So, I guess that helps to balance out from the work and stuff. And what I do as well – I try to do this every night as well or when I have free time – I try to make a to-do list for the next day, so that helps me because I wake up and I know what I'm going to do, as opposed to waking up and I have to think about what to do.

Yeah, so it helps with muscle toning and stuff and I wanted to try it at the start of the year, so finally I got around to it, and I signed up in August, and I started going. So, I think that's been a good improvement, cause before I think I was probably working too much and not getting enough physical exercise. So, what I'm doing at the moment is only going once or twice a week, but my goal is to get it up to maybe three or four times a week if I can. So that is part of my plan for balancing everything out.

I like to go in the evenings, because it's like you've done a whole day of work, then you go, and exercise and you have a shower and you feel good. So, I prefer to go in the evenings.

But in terms of playing it for my own enjoyment, I try to do it maybe twice or three times a week if I can. Sometimes if I don't feel like crocheting or whatever, cause I'm too tired, and I'm like "Just going to go and play some piano for fun". Yeah, so about two or three times a week.

Yeah, so when I crochet at night, when I do all the craft stuff at night I just kind of give myself that hour to just not think about anything. And then on the weekends as well, I'll just spend time with my partner cause he has a huge Lego collection, so he likes to make stuff with his Lego and I'll sit with him and just do some work, and other times I'll just help him with the Lego and stuff. So, I think that's also pretty nice because I don't have to be anywhere... So, basically at nights, and on the weekends.

I think for me, the stress – I think it can be managed if I plan really well, If I plan in advance what I'm going to do and then just do it when I see it in my to-do list, cause I guess it just prompts me to do it, and I don't have to think about it.

Cause like, I've put all my systems in place and I just do it. Another thing I just thought of, is probably social media. I'm pretty much non-existent on social media, like I have accounts, and I used to be way more active on them, but I found that it was pretty bad for my mental wellbeing, especially, so I basically cut down on it and so, I never go on Facebook except for work-related stuff. If for example, someone was asking me to teach their sons or daughters and I didn't have availability I put a

Facebook post and wait for someone to get back to me and then just pass it on. But that's basically the only reason I go on Facebook.

So, I think that was a period in time where self-compassion was literally non-existent. But I'm not really sure how it came about, how I got myself out of it, but I think doing my honours thesis has had quite a big impact in helping me get out of it. Because like, just focusing on the work every day, and kind of distancing yourself from what you're feeling and what you're thinking and stuff...it's more about "I'm going to get this work done, and I'm not going to think about anything else" and I think that really helped. And then, I started to feel more and more happy with myself for getting all this work done, and I think this helped with all the self-compassion and stuff like that. So, this year has been pretty big as well, so I finished my thesis in October 2017, and so the positive feelings were like building up, getting better. And then I went through a break-up in January this year, so that was really tough, but I think it was good because it helped me re-address my relationship with myself and how I wanted to be good to myself. So, now I think it's good, because I've gotten this really good balance, so I think it's like natural...I'm not sure if I'm consciously practicing self-compassion but I think maybe when we get into the flow of things, then it comes naturally.

it's not really a conscious decision on my part, so what I'm actually doing is taking care of the family house, my parents' house cause they're working away and my siblings are...my sister is working [away] and my brother is overseas. So I'm basically stuck here, but it's not too bad I guess, because having the house to myself means that I can structure my day however I want. So what I do is just work in the day, and teach, and if I have time I go to the health club in the evening and then I balance all the other house stuff like cooking, around those things. So solitude is like built into my everyday life, but I think it's good as well because I'm naturally fairly introverted as well, so if I'm around people too much and there's too much socialising I get really tired. And then I'm like "I need to shut down now"

I think that's been a big thing this year, like with the break-up...that happened when I was already alone, so my family were all on their ways and stuff, so I think being alone really helped me with that. With the depression and that, it was already helping me to be more aware of my emotions and with the break-up and being alone, I think that reinforced it even more. Also, what I neglected to mention was, with the solitude part, so I actually had a house-mate for a little bit of time, but I asked her to leave because it was too much for me. So during that period of time as well it helped me to be more...I mean, I was already aware of my emotions but I guess it helped me learn how to express them more. Because normally I'm not the type of person who would be so forthcoming about them, so yeah, I think that helped as well.

I feel like maybe I used to ascribe to that more, I used to try and build up meaning for myself, but then over the course of this year, I've come to the realisation that you don't really need a meaning. It's a bit of a weird thing to say, but like you make your own meaning, in the sense that whatever you're doing, make sure you're enjoying it...

Cause, if you're not enjoying your time, then obviously there's not going to be any meaning in your life, that's what I feel, so whatever you're doing like work, or whatever, find things that you like, basically. So just making meaning for yourself.

I stop following people whose posts I don't like seeing on my news feed on Facebook, even if I like spending time with the person who posted them in real life. Unfortunately you can't do that on Instagram so I end up unfollowing them on that platform (although it makes me feel bad doing it sometimes because I'm afraid I'll hurt their feelings). As a general rule I don't really like adding people on social media as it tends to change my perception of them, especially if I don't enjoy what they post. I also don't really like using Facebook Messenger or other messaging apps often as I don't like that the apps can track when you were last on them - I keep this feature off on Facebook and Whatsapp. The other feature that I'm not a big fan of is that the tick on both apps turns blue when the person has read your message, because then I expect a reply. I prefer email or SMS because there's none of the above and I don't feel as compelled to keep checking. I also decided to stop following the news from the start of this year, as I find them anxiety-inducing. If I do look at news, I tend to look more at general articles, e.g. new advances in research, an article on a well-known person/ composition, or an article reviewing a live concert.

Participant 10

Maybe about once a week I go out with friends on a weekend like a Saturday, for the whole day, or maybe catch up on Tuesday in the afternoon

Just exercise once a day, on the bike, go for a ride if I've got time

Researcher: Being gentle with yourself if you make mistakes and stuff like that...

That's right, yeah

[solitude] Yeah, yep. A lot of times, yeah.

[meditation] I just try to have a sleep after a meal or something, like close my eyes and have a nap for a little bit

[meaning] Yeah, like I go to church once a week, on Sunday, part of life...

Oh study, I used to study but I'm not doing anything now at the moment, not real sure what to do yet...

Participant 11

I've never really given much thought to it before but 6 years ago I was involved in some workplace incidents which resulted in some severe injuries And I had surgeries and chronic health issues And because they were quite aggressive incidents I ended up having some psychological issues as well So I've had to see a whole heap of neuropsychological Surgeons and Specialists within trauma so psychologists And I've had a lot of time to think about it So for me well-being is having that resilience having resilience Physically it's having resilience emotionally and psychologically. With me personally It's something I strive towards It's an all rounded holistic well-being I know that my well-being or my holistic health is improving When I know I've got good sleep hygiene I keep my pain threshold at a nice moderate I'm not as reactive to what goes on around me Either emotionally or psychologically. So there's a lot of positive self-talk Actually when it comes to the relationships I've never asked anybody for assistance before So part of that well-being is knowing when I need help and Requesting it in an effective manner Where I am asserting my needs but I'm not being overpowering to anyone else. So when I look at my well-being I see that I am a holistic resilient individual, And I invest a lot of time into the relationships that I do have, Relationships that we're having a negative influence on my mood or on my Person I have just eliminated, or cut down to a bare minimum. And I just see those people when I need to. And it's also just having that positive outlook of all those things can be bleak at times I ended up adopting the Mantra this too shall pass Instead of ruminating on it and fixating on This is dreadful it's about well what do I want And who do I want it with and how do I strive to get that. So I just do that by being open and reflective And making choices that are healthy and not destructive.

I would say that meaningfulness, that purposefulness, used to be - I went through a lot of psychotherapy - Because the workplace incidents I experienced mean that I can no longer perform that role. I was a teacher and I was very good at what I did, and I was a serious workaholic, so when I was told that I could no longer work within that profession I just felt pillaged Of everything. So I went through a lot of psychotherapy about the whole what does it mean to have purpose in life and be meaningful. Because I fixed it all upon my role as a mother and my role as a special education teacher because I wasn't in a romantic relationship at that time. So having that taken away from me and having no income I felt that I was being a bad mother, so I had to unravel all that stuff which took about 5 years. But I would say what provides the most meaning for me is the loving supportive relationships that I have.

So I'd say relationships. Yeah it's the relationships. The rest kind of seems trivial at times [laughter]. They certainly have impact but they don't have as much weight as relationships.

I'm very fortunate because I live out in the country, and I have four dogs -- I am dog-centric -- So to nurture the relationships with my dogs I spend lots of time with them train them. It probably sounds wanky, but I dehydrate their treats, I make sure they have a healthy diet.

With my husband, he's absolutely wonderful, and very accepting, and I find if I've been in a lot of emotional or physical pain I can be quite nasty, so it's a lot about me being mindful about saying what I need to say, or doing what I need to do. And when I do get a little bit cranky, I just step back and say why did I do that, It wasn't about him. And at times I'll just say to him, it wasn't you darling, it's just me. I'm just in a bit of turmoil, I'm going to step outside and... After I come back in I genuinely apologize because he doesn't deserve to be my backlash.

[my son] And I've always found that relationship mutually nourishing so it's really easy, and I get to see him grow and do things, and I feel like I can help him out at a rough time in his life. with my other kids I don't like to call them step kids, with my other kids when they've needed help I've just been there, it hasn't always been convenient, And there's been times when it's over stretched my health, but just remembering that providing for them is exceptionally important and those relationships. And the time and energy I put into those relationships it's not just about them, It's also about my husband. So, we've created a nice little group, And we go out for dinner once a month, all of us, and we have what we call our family Get together and it's really entertaining. So, Doing those things and just keeping in touch with what they're doing, Watching what they're doing on Facebook, and commenting, it's worth putting myself out sometimes. It's very difficult going from having just one child to having a whole entire family [laughter]. So, it's an ongoing pursuit, let's put it that way, so I guess, I do all those but I personally gain much more from all of them, my family and my dog's, than they I feel like I could give them, in return. So yeah I suppose that's how I do it, but I just accepting them and embracing them...

Well, I returned to, because I was a bit adrift as to what I was going to do, So over the last six years I've done a variety of different courses,

and we're going to be buying property to have a farm, to have a regenerative farm, so, animal ethics is a massive part of that for all of us, and taking a really responsible custodian approach to looking after the land. So, I returned to uni, and that's how I came across you.

and I thought no because this is going to inform what we do on our land, because I have no background in agriculture, So I started mid-semester last year And will be doing a major thesis, so my aspirations are to do a PhD. And I think that's something for me that it feels a little bit like a flight of fancy, But I think, no, that's actually going to help improve my well-being. And I suppose it comes down to that meaningfulness, but it's more that I would like to contribute to improving our environment, because I very much believe in sustainability And looking at what they call agri-ecological farm processes. So looking at farms as an ecology not just a monoculture Like having a paddock with black cows treating it as a system, which it really is.

so I'm finally going back to something that I'm passionate about protecting and nurturing the natural environment but it will be my farm and our livestock, so I'm going to be a farmer which is pretty cool!

So I guess it does link into that meaningfulness and it's not just me doing it on my own it's my son and my husband as well which will be really cool I think. I guess that adds to the purposefulness and meaning in life day by day.

I will always contemplate what I'm wanting to achieve and what that looks like so visibly what does that look like and I think that's one thing That was just drilled into us when I was doing my special education and working with students with special needs. Ok well what do we want to achieve and then having goalposts along the way. so smart goals they need to be meaningful they need to be relevant, you need to be able to assess them they need to be Timely. So I'll go through and say well I want to achieve this And what does it look like Visually what does it look like and how will I know I have achieved it And then break it down into small Chunks So I'll know if I'm on track Cos I am quite a spontaneous individual and just go yay Jump in at the deep end and get myself Into a bit of a fix so And then I use a lot of energy just treading water So there has to be that strategic planning. Like one of the things I'm looking at, at the moment is, I used to swim to kilometres a day But I haven't been able to swim at all due to physical limitations For the past six years, and I've decided recently That I'd like to go swimming so by next summer I'd like to be able to go to the beach and do some well not laps but Do some surf swimming So how does that look like and I visualise myself doing it And then breaking it down into chunks like where do I need to start? First thing I need to do is go to the pool To a safe environment where I can

do that, Building up. So it's just that being realistic And having the overall goal And the steps along the way

Yes and that way it is sustainable because the Crash and Burn... If I just jump in now, I end up having flare ups. And I'd be in bed for a week or two. So I've learnt that the principles I applied when I was teaching I need to apply those to myself

And I need to take very careful care of my health, And that's the physical and emotional. I have now learnt where my limits are, And I respect those limits. I used to be very angry with my body for a very long time And I ended up realising that my body hasn't let me down, It's a vessel that's looked after me. And everything that my body does, is to protect me. It's here for me so I need to respect it in return. And I do that through a variety of ways just by taking time out by eating well

And now it's like that's not healthy for my body, It's not helping at restore or rest it's just taxing it further So it's very much about listening To what my body is telling me but also being very Reflective on the way I respond to situations And respond to particular people So just knowing this is what my triggers are, And do I want to engage those triggers Or do I want to circumvent that? and in the end I go I want to be as healthy as I can In every single way that I can. Because I've got lots to live for.

[self-compassion] Critical. Yes that's something I've been working a lot on. And not just me emotionally and intellectually but also physically It's about loving myself which is very difficult for me to do at times

I'm a gregarious and outgoing person but Also a dead set introvert. I'm quite happy to discuss things And I'm open and direct but I find Social interactions exhausting. one on one I'm good But if it's a group I tire very quickly. I'm the kind of person that can live within herself. Like I'm quite happy to go away In the middle of the bush by myself and camp for a week with one of my dogs, and I'm in bliss. I mean that's Heaven but there's also a danger in that too. I could quite easily become a hermit [laughter]. But yeah, It is something that I've always done ever since I was a child And I find that it refuels me. And provide me with peace but also time for reflection, And introspection like what do I want where am I going.

So time on my own...If I don't get it I'm a ratbag.

When I was younger I used to meditate quite regularly But after having my son it wasn't so possible. And then did some mindfulness training with my psychologist So I went to mindfulness classes and I find that that's been quite helpful. There was a

period when I was practicing mindfulness two or three times a day. I don't do it so much now but I guess my form of meditation is to go sit in the garden and watch what's going on there, Or just to go sit on the beach and watch. And I'll be mindful of my breathing. I also see a myotherapist once a week, and when I see her it's very much about the breathing. so I find that Deep breathing very helpful but to actually meditate for half an hour, I really struggle with that, I can't sit still for long enough. So I prefer to watch nature go past and that's how I meditate. Technically it's not meditation...

To me it's very important. In that I want to be able to maintain healthy relationships with loved ones -- I sort of feel like I live on a tightrope, Is there are any stresses that are out of the norm of being too physical or I've been sitting too long. Warm weather is really good for me but if all of a sudden we get a cold snap Or if I have an emotional charge my health deteriorates And it takes a long time to get it back on to that Equilibrium. So not only is it important for the relationships but also for my sense of being a good person, I don't like having emotional outbursts. And I don't like seeing pain on the faces of those I love, And I certainly don't want to be the one who causes it. And also for my chronic health issues I've learnt that it's extremely important for me to keep a nice base line, it's just not worth it.

But I didn't say no even though I really really wanted to. And for me, providing that support for him even though he stuffed up -- was more important than staying at home. So it's incidents like that or like going to the in-laws. But I've got better at that, where I say to my husband -- he's got a very large family -- Their Christmas dos can last 12 hours, So I go every second year now, and he goes on the alternate year. And on that year, I'll just hang out with my son we'll go to a restaurant or something.

And I suppose I've had to learn to say no appropriately [laughter] Instead of just saying f*** that [laughter] I just use... I don't know if you've heard about the spoons? Something called spoon Theory. It's where you wake up every morning and you've got so many spoons, and it might take a spoon to have a shower, And a spoon to complete a certain task. And every morning when you wake up you don't always have the same number of spoons. So, I've learnt just to say I don't have the spoons for it. I don't have the energy, I don't have what it's going to take. And I need to ration out my spoons everyday. So if I feel reactive and I want to growl at people I just say, no I don't have the spoons for it. I just can't do this it's going to cost too much.

And some mornings I might wake up and I've got three tablespoons and two teaspoons. But that seems to work really well for me it helps me visualise what energy I have and how much I'm going to spend. And sometimes like recently I spent more energy -- and I knew I had things to do during the day -- but for me personally, I wanted to go and work in the garden for two hours. Yet I knew that was going to take up a lot of my resources, my physical energy, but I did it anyway. Because that was for me and it just meant that I had less reserves for everybody else. And it was like, well yes, I needed that. Because if I hadn't done that and spent all my reserves on you, then I would have been really grumpy [laughter] Because I need to do something for myself too.

I was always a real outsider at school and had been bullied quite a bit for it, because I would just prefer to sit there and read a book. And I had acquaintances that I would flit in and out with. There were always two girls, that if I wanted to reach out and have social contact, I could do that with them, but it wasn't uncommon for me to be sitting alone reading a book. So I wasn't one of those girls who had a group of friends and was with them every recess and lunch time. And fortunately, they were really understanding. As I've got older, I've never really enjoyed group activities, so I much prefer one-on-one and having meaningful relationships. So I don't consider that I have many friends, I have a few people that I consider to be friends, but even then I don't see them very often for a range of reasons. But that doesn't matter because when I do see them, we just reconnect.

But it's something that's become more meaningful and I'm able to be more discerning. Not just about who I like, or I don't really like, but who I spend my time with and doing what. So, I've got 6 dear friends but I don't ever get them together

Even if it's just about what have you been doing? It sounds a bit arrogant but on a deeper more meaningful level that's where my interactions are, rather than having a host of millions and I know nothing about them other than their name.

Participant 12

I find myself kind of in the middle or above, it's not the best level. The reason is because sometimes I find myself very innocent, or I think things are very simple, rather than very comprehensive and well-run and attention to logic, so I think a lot of things like socialising, I can definitely do better. But I kind of lacked that experience when I was very young, most of my time was pushed by my parents to just focus on

study, so I have friends but not many. I regard them as friends, we are quite close which I can always find help. But I don't always want to do things in a group, or do something together, I want sometimes to have my own freedom or maybe my own space. So, from that perspective sometimes it's hard for my friends to know whether I want to join them this time, next time. Because they're always together and then I'm kind of like all this time I will join and next time I don't. So I find it's probably about the middle or above.

I think both physical health and mental health are important to me. Both of them are important. So physical health, maybe eating healthy food, and doing exercises every day, that's very important, rather than staying at home and doing nothing. And also, the meaning of life is quite important for me. So I wouldn't spend the whole day without meaning anything, maybe I don't know why I am doing it, I find that's quite important for the things I do, if I really enjoy it I would love to do it. Also, I guess, relationship is very important for me. Family relationships, I talk with my parents, so we always meet online most of the time. And also, how to balance the network of friends, work colleagues, study buddies, yeah.

I talk with my family almost every day or at least 4-5 days a week. So that's quite important for me because I'm also their only child and I'm overseas and they're worried about me. So they ask "Are you okay? What have you done today? Any pictures and stuff?" Also I guess, the friendship is quite important, so I would like to hang out with friends, I spend some time with them and know how they go. So I'm in Jakarta but sometimes I send messages to my friends in Australia And say "how was your uni? how was your holiday?" Because those people are quite important to me, so I send a message every now and then.

think it is more self-awareness. Let's say, how many times, when I was in an emotional situation, I can control my mind or control my emotion. This time, I think oh yeah, I do better than before.

I do that a lot, I think no-one can be successful always, so "this time maybe I didn't get the grades that I expected, so is it because I didn't do much review, or the wrong sentence, or I didn't sleep too well the night before the exam" so I will find what I can improve, for next time, so that's makes me feel a lot better rather than just getting upset. I think I always regard everything as a good learning opportunity. "Even if I didn't get it, but I tried" so, I always talk to myself "Yes, you will always have other chances."

Yes, that's really important. I would get really tired if I went out with friends every day during the week. I think it's really important that I stay with myself, get some work done, or just chilling with a movie, or listen to music. Yeah, so that's very important, I think. Because I think, in the past, I am a very shy introverted person, I don't always like to be in a very loud environment, and the Australian culture is more people are outgoing than introverted, so I'm kind of changing myself to adapt to the culture.

Yeah, I have a friend from China who is practising spiritual, not only at home, but he also goes to India, and when I was doing meditation with him, I was thinking "meditation is probably just you stay there, and you just focus on your mind" and he said "you can meditate any time, even when you're watching TV, or when you're eating" so it's quite different from what I understand. So for me, I guess the message is if you spend time every day, say 15 or 20 minutes every day when you get up or before you sleep, I'm not doing it every day, but I like to make my brain blank, and don't think about anything, just sit there and do nothing, that's a way for me to kind of meditate. I think the program of meditation with some questions that I need to answer after the meditation, which I find is quite fun and important, because those questions I had never considered or never thought about. – only when I started typing the answers. So, that program also helped me a lot. I know there are quite a few apps that I have tried to practise meditation, but I would do it this way, but then maybe tomorrow I couldn't do it because I have other things. So inconsistent, but I know I probably should do it.

I think I'm maybe very straight and simple, I don't like to think in a very complicated way, so people are always telling me "You probably should relax more because you're so hard-working" and I will try to balance myself, and I will feel that emotion, and feel quite energetic. Like before I came here, when I was in Australia, I went running every day. In the beginning I could only run 600 meters, at the peak time I ran 10 kms. So, I can feel I'm improving not only my physical health but also mental health. Because at the time when I was running it was kind of a way for me to meditate, thinking not about my study, but about very random stuff, and after that I feel "Wow, I'm so fulfilled".