

# Wholebeing Happiness

## A Mini Workbook on SPIRE: The Five Perspectives of Well-Being

by Megan McDonough

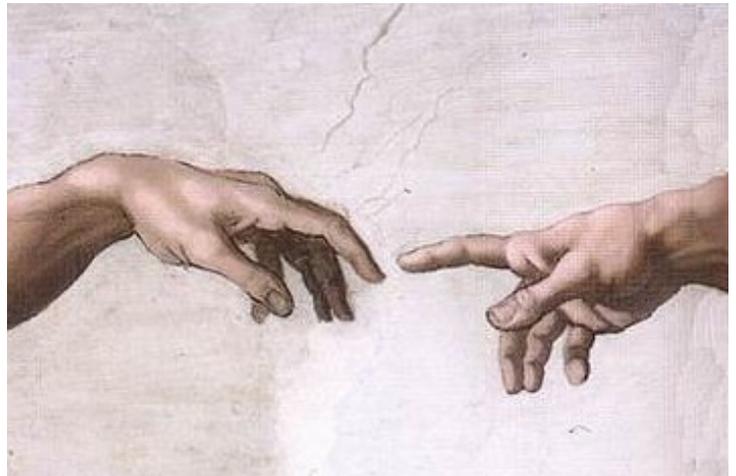
### The Power of Perspective

The Renaissance gave birth to creative genius. For roughly 300 years, the most breathtaking art was created, including Michelangelo's painting of the Sistine Chapel and da Vinci's Last Supper.

The word "renaissance" means "rebirth" in French. Intellectually, culturally, and artistically, it was a time of ripe blossoming.

Science and art became closely connected as artists took the newly discovered rules of geometry and applied them to perspective. Using linear perspective, artists rendered incredibly real scenes that pulled the viewer in. Setting a vanishing point directed attention in a certain way; the use of horizon and orthogonal lines produced depth and authenticity.

By understanding the mathematical model that described perspective, artists recreated life on canvas, on ceilings, and in marble.



Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo

*Perspective creates great art,  
and it creates a great life.*

## An Inspired Perspective

The perspective of focusing on what works—what’s good in our lives— takes effort. Well, maybe not so much effort as a willingness to look at life through a different lens.

The Renaissance artists used linear perspective to draw great art. We can use a five-dimensional perspective of well-being to draw our inspired life. We call it SPIRE.



There’s a natural tendency we humans have to focus on what’s broken—what’s not working. This tendency is called the negativity bias. For example, health care is not so much about health as it is about fixing illness. Therapy concentrates on anxiety, depression, and mental illness. We’re tough on ourselves, too, focusing on perceived imperfections in our body or within our being. The same holds true for those we love—it’s easy to overlook the good and harp on what’s wrong. As Dr. Rick Hanson says, “In effect, the brain is like Velcro for negative experiences, but Teflon for positive ones.”

*An inspired perspective aims  
towards the best—towards lifting  
ourselves up.*



The School of Athens by Raphael

When you gaze at Raphael's painting *The School of Athens*, you feel as if you're inside this grand hall, looking through soaring arches and catching a glimpse of blue sky and clouds beyond. You can feel the engagement of Plato and Aristotle as they walk towards the stairs, with groups of learners nearby, all deep in conversation or concentration. You can see the whole picture, and you can see the individual parts of the visual story.

When we use an inspired lens to look at life from the five perspectives, we begin to see ourselves from new angles. We begin to see the interplay of all the SPIRE parts that make up the whole.

We call that big-picture view wholebeing—the wide perspective of whole-person well-being (yes, wholebeing is a mashup of the two words).

Simply put, wholebeing is our definition of happiness. Rather than smiley-face happy-ology, wholebeing fits with Aristotle's definition of human flourishing, which he called eudaemonia.

Wholebeing is whole-person happiness. Who wouldn't want that every day? Let's get to work on that ...

## Whole-Person Happiness, Every Day

We hear this question, or even ask it, several times a day: “How are you doing?”

If you’re like most of us, you rarely answer in detail, and the person who asks is probably fine with that. We’ve become used to not really knowing, or being known by, others.

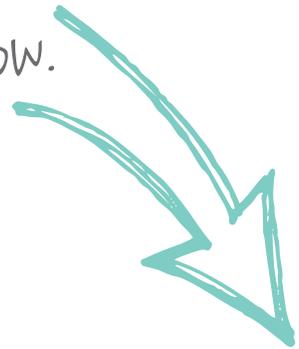
Yet, knowing and explaining how we’re really doing gets to the heart of where we’re at in our lives. Answering this question takes some thought and reflection.

The truth is, the question isn’t just one question—it’s five. That’s where this mini workbook comes in.

When you understand the five perspectives that create the whole of your well-being, you can see more clearly how you are doing—how you are REALLY doing—in each aspect of life. These perspectives are your Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Relational, and Emotional (SPIRE) well-being.

By looking at each facet individually, you can more clearly track your progress over time and put in place action plans to appreciate what’s best in your life. You can then bring the positive energy from these successes to address whatever concerns you have in other parts of your life.

The SPIRE check-in is an easy way to  
see a bigger perspective of well-being.  
Start now by printing out page 8.  
Then follow the steps outlined below.



## STEP ONE: What is my experience now?

**S**  
SPIRITUAL  
Leading a meaningful life and mindfully savoring the present.

**P**  
PHYSICAL  
Caring for the body and tapping into the mind/body connection.

**I**  
INTELLECTUAL  
Engaging in deep learning and opening to experience.

**R**  
RELATIONAL  
Nurturing a constructive relationship with self and others.

**E**  
EMOTIONAL  
Feeling all emotions, reaching towards resilience and positivity.

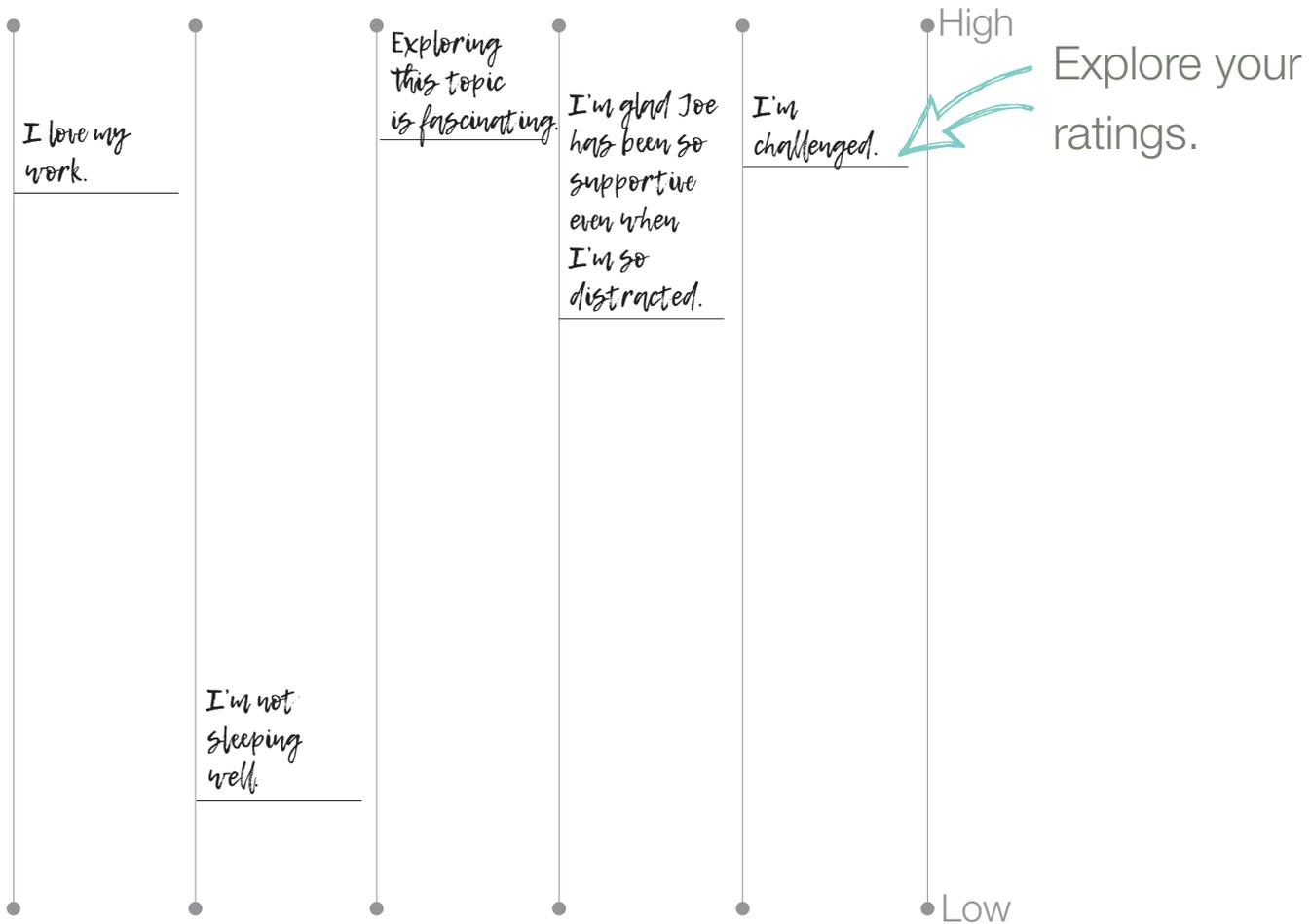
High

Rate yourself on each aspect.

Low

The first step of the check-in is drawing lines to represent where you rate yourself on each aspect. The higher up the line is, the more positive the rating. This is not rocket science. It's a best guess of where you think you are in this moment, on this day, in each aspect of SPIRE. It's cultivating self-awareness. How do you feel spiritually (meaning, purpose, or mindful living)? Physically? Intellectually (engaged in deep learning, interested, or open to experience)? Relationally? Emotionally?

## STEP TWO: What else can I be aware of?



Explore the ratings you just made. What more is behind each of them? Name some drivers behind your assessments. Write the reasons on the line. In this personal example, I did the SPIRE check-in while getting ready for a lecture. By looking more deeply into my experience, I could see that the topic I was speaking about was fully engaging my intellect, compromising my physical health, and distracting me from an important relationship. I was emotionally stable and doing meaningful work. This SPIRE check-in gave me a snapshot of my wholebeing.

## STEP THREE: What action can I take?



Once you see the whole, you can take constructive action. In this case, I could see that the most helpful thing I could do was to take a nap! Look at your own check-in. What action would raise your overall sense of well-being, even if only slightly? What holds the greatest leverage towards wholebeing? It might not always be the lowest rating that drives action: It could be that the highest rating is pushing others to be low, and that's where you want to focus. Or, you recognize that the relational aspect holds such leverage for you that going to dinner with friends would be most nourishing. Experiment, test, and play with your experience. Now use the blank sheet on the following page to do your own check-in.

## My SPIRE Check In



## Examples of Actions

S

### SPIRITUAL

Leading a meaningful life and mindfully savoring the present.

### SPIRITUAL

- Notice the breath coming in and out.
- Be aware of sensation, thoughts, and emotions.
- Identify what is meaningful to you.
- Remind yourself of your deeply held values.

P

### PHYSICAL

Caring for the body and tapping into the mind/body connection.

### PHYSICAL

- Go for a walk, dance, or jog.
- Connect with nature.
- Eat a healthy meal.
- Take a nap.

I

### INTELLECTUAL

Engaging in deep learning and opening to experience.

### INTELLECTUAL

- Reread a meaningful text, seeing it anew.
- Follow your curiosity towards an interest.
- Visit a museum and look closely at what you see.
- Do something you've never done.
- Notice something new in the mundane.

R

### RELATIONAL

Nurturing a constructive relationship with self and others.

### RELATIONAL

- Hug a loved one with full attention.
- Tell another what you appreciate in them.
- Notice what you appreciate in yourself.
- Share how your teachers have impacted you.

E

### EMOTIONAL

Feeling all emotions, reaching towards resilience and positivity.

### EMOTIONAL

- Smile!
- Recall a time when you successfully overcame difficulty.
- Accept all your emotions as valid.
- Ask yourself what will increase your joy, now.

## Journal Prompts to Dive Deeper

S

### SPIRITUAL

Leading a meaningful life and mindfully savoring the present.

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### EMOTIONAL

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Writing can give us a richer story about our well-being. It can also provide a more complex understanding of our relationship to our well-being. Here are some prompts to generate deeper exploration.

- What story does your check-in tell?
- What insight does it provide?
- How does it apply to your life in general, above and beyond this moment?
- How does today's check-in relate to yesterday's check-in?
- What patterns can you see?
- How does one aspect of your life influence others? For example, how does your physical well-being affect your emotional well-being? How does your emotional well-being play a role in your relationships?
- When you engage all five elements of well-being (when you don't sorely neglect one or more aspects), what happens? How does this engagement affect your life?
- Connect with the personal meaning behind each aspect of SPIRE. Why is it important to you to cultivate spiritual well-being? Why do you need this in your life? Do this for each of the SPIRE perspectives.

## From the Author

In *The School of Athens*, the two main characters in the center of the scene, Plato and Aristotle, are holding their hands in different positions. Plato, on the left, points his fingers to the sky. Beside him, Aristotle holds his hand open, palm down, towards the earth. Each physically represents his philosophical take on life. Plato points to the higher, ephemeral, and ultimate reality—the ideal, of which this earthly realm is but a mere shadow. Aristotle, on the other hand, holds that the only reality is right in front of us—the earthly connection to self and others, to what we can see, taste, hear, and smell.

Whole-person happiness holds both truths—that we can see a vision of the ideal self, and also be fully grounded in the real self.

The word SPIRE is within the word “respire,” meaning “to breathe.” It’s also within the word “inspire,” which literally means “to take in air.” Whole-person happiness—wholebeing—is elemental to life itself. Wholebeing is fundamental.

To feel inspired also means being filled with the urge to do or create something. And then there’s the word “aspire,” also containing SPIRE, which refers to reaching higher or directing one’s vision toward achieving greater goals.

It’s my hope that this mini workbook has given you a sense of both groundedness and greatness. You can have roots to hold yourself stable and also wings to lift yourself to new heights.



Wishing you all the best, always,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan".

Megan McDonough  
CEO, Wholebeing Institute

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