



Happiness, Engagement, and Flourishing

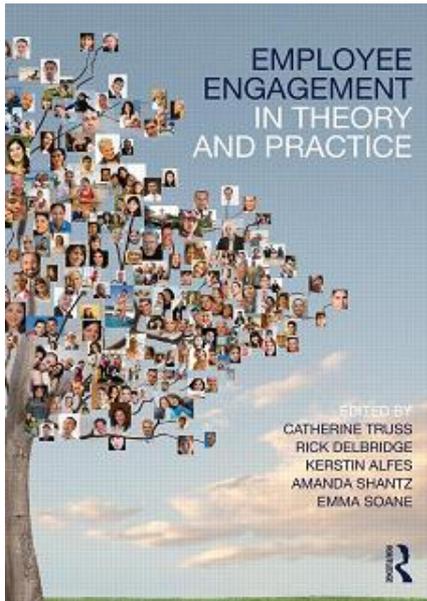
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Employee Engagement Conference
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Overview

- Introduction to employee engagement
- Importance of flourishing
- Definition of flourishing
- Pessimism/optimism about flourishing
- Approaches to happiness and flourishing
- Flourishing in general and at work
- Antecedents and outcomes of flourishing
- Pathways to flourishing

Employee Engagement



- Engagement refers to the extension of the self to a work role (Kahn, 1990, 2014)
- Vitality, dedication, and absorption
- Include behavioural indicators of employee engagement in definition and measurement thereof
- Organisational engagement recently studied



Rothmann, S. (2015). Employee engagement. In M.F. Steger, L. Oades, A. Delle Fave, & J. Passmore (Eds.), *Wiley Blackwell handbook of positivity and strengths based approaches at work*.

Engagement: Psychological Conditions

- A study with 309 employees in organisations in Namibia showed that work role fit and job enrichment were strong predictors of psychological meaningfulness (48% of the variance explained), while co-worker support and the availability of personal resources were the strongest predictors of psychological availability (16% of the variance explained). Psychological meaningfulness and availability predicted 49% of the variance in engagement.
- Predictors of engagement included work role fit, job enrichment, rewards, co-worker relations, resources, supervisor relations and organisational support.



Rothmann, S., & Welsh, C. (2013). Employee engagement in Namibia: The role of psychological conditions. *Management Dynamics*, 22(1), 14–25.

Job Demands-Resources Model

- Intrinsic nature of jobs and organisational support contributed strongly to work engagement (36% of the variance explained).
- Dispositional optimism, supervisor relations, role clarity and the intrinsic job characteristics were strongly associated with engagement of academics (80% of the variance explained)
- Dispositional optimism affected perceptions of job resources (33% of the variance explained)



Barkhuizen, N., Rothmann, S. & Van de Vijver, A. J. R. (2013). Work-related well-being of academic staff: The role of optimism. *Stress and Health*.

Rothmann, S. & Rothmann, S. (Jr). (2010). Factors associated with employee engagement in South African organisations. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(1), 1-12. doi:10.4102/sajip.v36i1.925.

Self-determination and Engagement

Leader support
for psychological
need satisfaction

Need Satisfaction

- Competence (7%)
- Autonomy (41%)
- Relatedness (21%)

Engagement
(61% of the
variance
explained)



Fouche, E., & Rothmann, S. (in press). Psychological need satisfaction, engagement and intention to leave: The effects of leader support. *Career Development International*.

Importance of Flourishing

- Employees who flourish are 7 times more likely to be engaged at work.
- Organisations increasingly have to rely on the unique intellectual and personal strengths of their employees.
- It is not only a matter of getting employees to do their work, but rather how to get them to do good work, or their best work.
- But, how can a company foster that when work-life balance and burnout are becoming more of a concern?
- Will an exclusive focus on employee engagement result in positive individual and organisational outcomes?

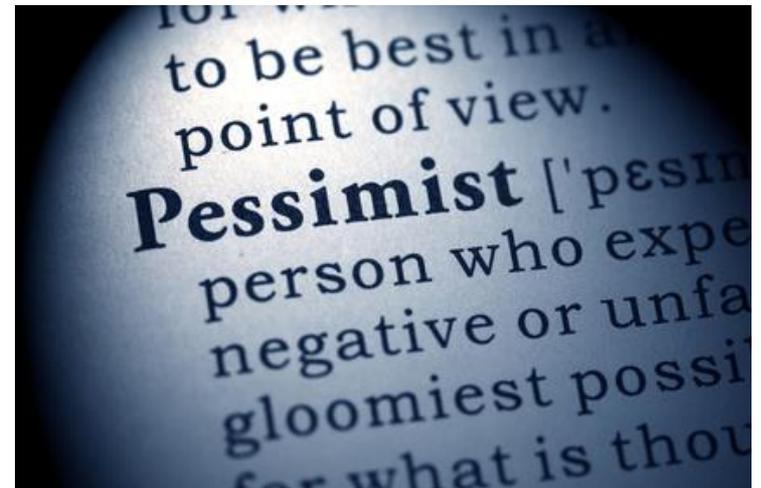
You Are Flourishing When You ...

- feel satisfied with your life as well as different life domains
- experience positive emotions
- are psychologically well
- are socially well



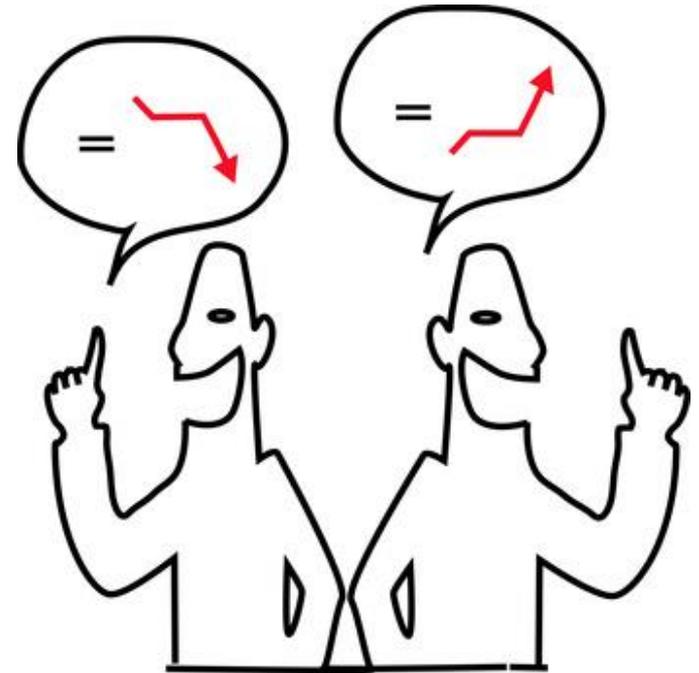
Pessimism about Flourishing

- People have a genetically determined set point which determines at least 50% of their happiness.
- Personality characteristics of individuals are remarkably stable over time.
- Gains in happiness are short term because people adapt quickly to change.



Optimism about Flourishing

- Greater happiness can be achieved over time.
- Motivational and attitudinal factors are amenable to some control (e.g. optimistic perspective).
- Unwanted effects of genes could be minimised by active efforts to steer oneself away from situations that detract from well-being.

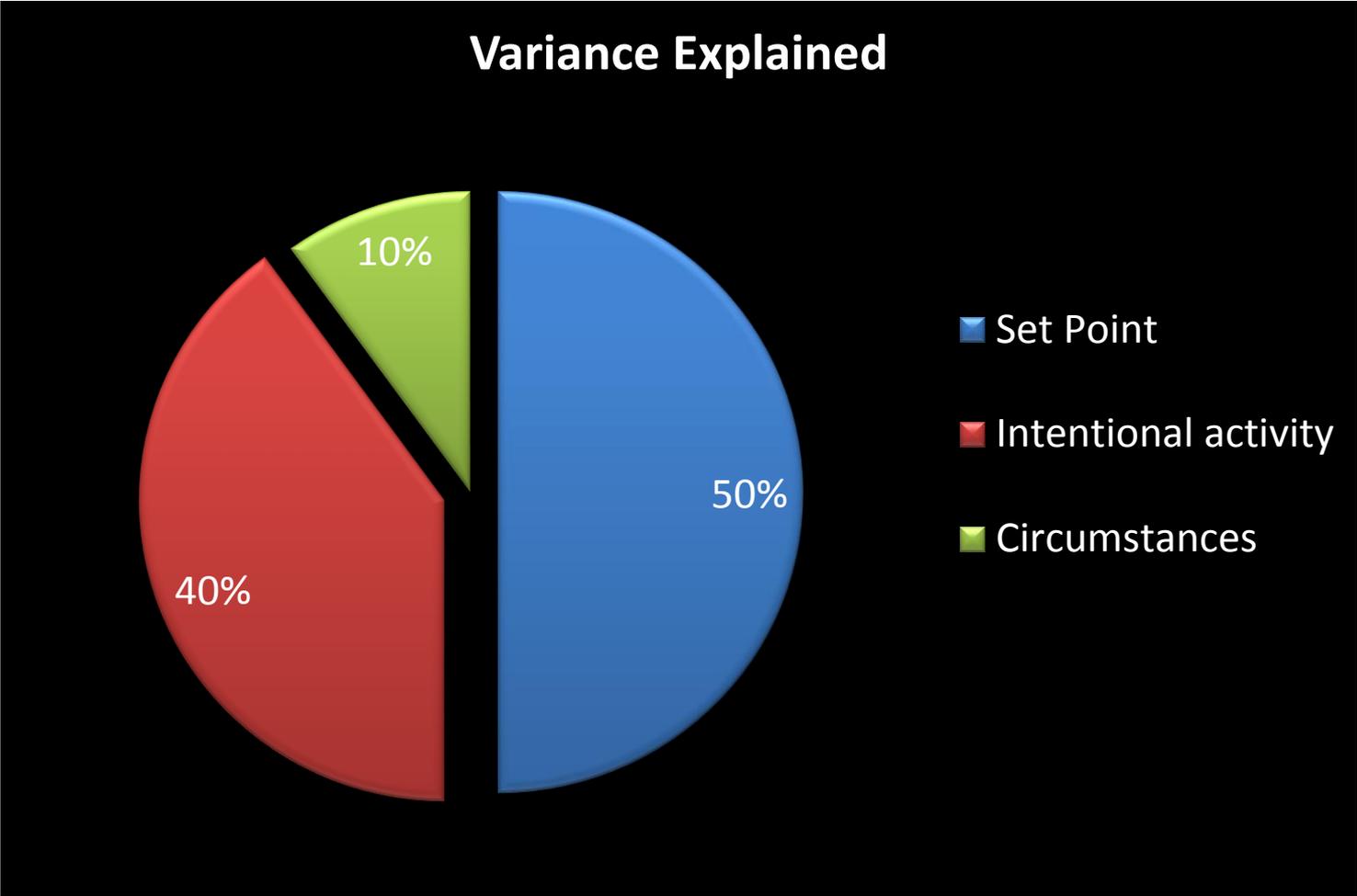


- The key to flourishing lies not in changing our genetic make-up, and not in changing our circumstances, but in our daily intentional activities (what we do and what we think)

**Sonja
Lyubomirsky**



What Determines Flourishing?



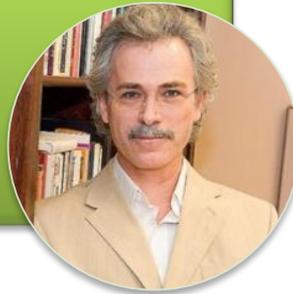
Approaches to Happiness and Flourishing

- Subjective well-being (Ruut Veenhoven, Ed Diener)
- PERMA (Martin Seligman)
- Flourishing (Corey Keyes)
- Flourishing at work (Ian Rothmann)

Flourishing: Corey Keyes

- Subjective well-being consists of two conceptual traditions, namely feeling good about (i.e., positive emotions towards) one's life, and functioning well in life.

**Corey Keyes
(2003)**



Employees Are Flourishing When They ...

Feel satisfied with their lives (and different life domains), experience positive emotions, are psychologically well, and are socially well

Multi-dimensional nature of well-being (FEEL and FUNCTION well)

Categorical Diagnosis



Flourishing

- “Almost every day” or “every day” past month
- 1 Hedonia
- 6 or more positive functioning



Languishing

- “Never” or “once or twice” past month
- 1 Hedonia
- 6 or more positive functioning



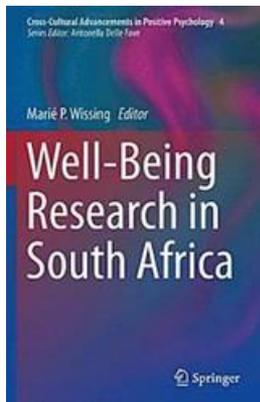
Moderately Mentally Healthy

- “About once a week” or “two or three times a week”

Flourishing in South Africa



Sample	Languish	Moderate	Flourish
General population (N = 1050)	20.0%	67.8%	12.2%
Pharmacy students (N = 782)	2.7%	57.0%	40.3%
IT professionals (N = 205)	3.9%	58.5%	37.6%
Managers (N = 507)	3.0%	48.5%	48.5%



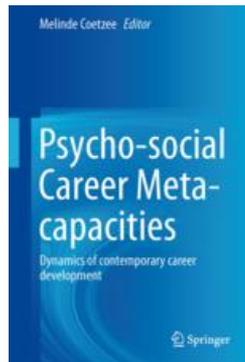
Rothmann, S. (2013). From happiness to flourishing at work: A southern African perspective. In M.P. Wissing (Ed.), *Well-being research in South Africa: Cross-cultural advances in positive psychology - Volume 4* (pp. 123-152). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Predictors of Flourishing (Managers)

Variable	Estimate	SE	Est/SE	p
Work Role Fit	.28	.05	5.27	.000*
Job Characteristics	.27	.07	3.99	.000*
Overload	-.02	.05	-0.42	.672
Supervisor Relations	.02	.07	0.32	.752
Co-worker Relations	.20	.06	3.61	.000*
Advancement	-.06	.05	-1.09	.275
Remuneration	.14	.05	2.84	.005*

* $p < .01$

$R^2 = 43\%$



Rothmann, S. (2014). Flourishing in work and careers. In M. Coetzee (Ed.), *Psycho-social career meta-capacities: Dynamics of contemporary career development* (pp. 203-220). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer International Publishing.

Flourishing at Work





Flourishing: Emotional Well-being

During the past month at work, how often did you ...

1. feel happy? (positive affect)
2. feel upset? (negative affect)
3. experience satisfaction with your job? (job satisfaction)



Flourishing: Psychological Well-being

During the past month at work, how often did you feel ...

4. you can do your job the way you think it could best be done? (autonomy)
5. good at managing the responsibilities of your job? (competence)
6. that you experienced warm and trusting relationships with others at work? (relatedness)
7. find yourself learning often? (learning)
8. that your work makes a difference to the world? (meaning)
9. that the work you do serves a greater purpose? (purpose)
10. focus a great deal of attention on your work? (absorption)
11. become enthusiastic about your job? (dedication)
12. feel energised when you work? (vitality)



Flourishing: Social Well-being

During the past month at work, how often did you ...

13. feel you had something important to contribute to this organisation? (social contribution)
14. feel you really belong to this organisation? (social integration)
15. feel this organisation is becoming a better place for people like you? (social actualization)
16. feel that people in your organisation are basically good? (social acceptance)
17. feel that the way your organisation works, makes sense to you? (social coherence)

Flourishing at Work



Sample	Languish	Moderate	Flourish
Fast moving consumer goods (N = 779)	8.0% (62)	56.1% (437)	35.9% (280)

Predictors of flourishing

- Overload: 0.02
- Job insecurity: 0.03
- Compensation: -0.03
- **Advancement: 0.46****
- **Work-life interference: -0.19***
- **Authentic leadership: 0.28****



Rautenbach, C., & Rothmann, S. (in press). Flourishing at work: The psychometric properties of a multidimensional scale.

Flourishing at Work: Why?

- + Company gives opportunities to attend training courses aligned to the job
- + There are sufficient opportunities for advancement in the company
- + Employee gets opportunity to be developed for future career in company
- + Employee does not frequently have to take work home
- + Job does not keep employee from spending time with his/her family
- + Employee does not miss out on important family events because of work
- + Leader is authentic:
 - conscious of his/her personal characteristics and the impact thereof on others.
 - does not distort information that has been collected, but rather pay attention to both positive and negative interpretations about themselves and their leadership style.
 - aligns his/her values with his/her intentions and actions.
 - openly share information.

Theories/Models Explaining Flourishing

- **Relational model:** Relational contexts shape engagement, meaningfulness, relatedness and competence by deepening individuals' experiences of the purposes of their work and by heightening their sense of belongingness at work; through empathic acknowledgement and an enabling perspective; and through energizing interactions and emotional relief (Kahn & Heapy, 2014). People who are given feedback on their strengths are significantly more likely to feel highly engaged and to be more productive than people who are given feedback on their weaknesses.
- **Work beliefs:** Meaning of work is the set of beliefs that an individual holds about work which results in experiences of psychological meaningfulness. A calling has been defined as a “meaningful beckoning toward activities that are morally, socially and personally significant” (Wrzesniewski, 2012)

Work Beliefs and Meaningful Work



Studies in South Africa and Zambia confirmed the results of international studies that to view your job as a calling contributes to meaning. Can jobs be recrafted?

Theories/Models Explaining Flourishing

- **Self-determination theory:** A manager or leader should show support for autonomy, competence and relatedness satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2008).
- **Positive practices:** Positive practices (which support virtuousness in an organisation) are positively correlated with perceived performance, including innovation, quality, turnover and customer retention (Cameron et al., 2011). Six categories of positive practices, namely caring, compassionate support, forgiveness, inspiration, meaning and respect, integrity and gratitude.

Promoting Flourishing

- **Pathway 1:** Psychological meaningfulness – recraft work (having a purpose) and increase person-environment fit (through human resource management initiatives, such as recruitment, selection, induction, training and development and performance management, and teambuilding (to promote co-worker relations))



Steger, M. F., Littman-Ovadia, H., Miller, M., Menger, L., & Rothmann, S. (2013). Engaging in work even when it is meaningless: Positive affective disposition and meaningful work interact in relation to work-engagement. *Journal of Career Assessment, 21*, 348-361.

Promoting Flourishing

- Three main ways in which employees can re-craft their work:
 - By reframing the societal rationale of their work;
 - By taking on additional work that is more closely related to that which they like;
 - By giving more time, energy and attention to tasks that provide meaning and engage them.

Promoting Flourishing

- **Pathway 2:** Prepare leaders (and management staff), co-workers and employees to create a motivational climate by focusing on psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, competence and relatedness)

Leader Support

Autonomy support

- Encourage employees to participate in important decisions.
- Strengthen employees to speak about what they feel.
- Listen to different points of view before coming to conclusions.
- Encourage employees to speak up when they disagree with a decision.

Competence support

- Support employees' attempts to acquire additional training or education to further their careers.
- Give employees helpful feedback about their performance.
- Care about whether or not employees achieve their goals.
- Make sure that employees get the credit when they accomplish something substantial on the job.
- Give employees helpful advice about improving their performance when they need it.

Relatedness support

- Treat staff fairly.
- Show commitment to protect staff interests.
- Do what they say they will do.
- Are accessible.
- Have confidence in employees' abilities.

Promoting Flourishing

- **Pathway 3:** Increase employee engagement:
 - Deepen employees' experiences of the purposes of their work and heighten their sense of belongingness at work;
 - Maintain empathic acknowledgement and an enabling perspective
 - Establish energizing interactions and emotional relief
 - Focus on strengths of individuals in relation to work roles
 - Provide resources (job and personal) to deal with demands

Promoting Flourishing

- **Pathway 4:** Build positive practices on organisational level: The central theme centres around contributions made by the organisation to the welfare of its human capital. Improvement in client satisfaction, internal climate, employee participation, and quality of work occur when organisations
 - provide compassionate support for employees
 - emphasize positive and inspiring messages to employees
 - forgive mistakes
 - express gratitude to and confidence in employees
 - clarify the meaningfulness of the work being done, and
 - reinforce an environment characterised by respect and integrity.

Limitations

- Studies were cross-sectional: longitudinal and experimental studies required to prove the causality
- Behaviours that are associated with different dimensions of flourishing have to be identified and measured (this will allow others than the individual him or herself to evaluate flourishing)

Finally ...

- Interventions are not only necessary to help languishing people, or to assist moderately flourishing people to function optimally: interventions are needed to KEEP people FLOURISHING!

Thank You

[Web: www.ianrothmann.com](http://www.ianrothmann.com)



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The logo for Optentia features a yellow semi-circle above the word "OPTENTIA" in a green, sans-serif font.