

# Guide to Strengthening Career Well-Being

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The  
Career  
Key 

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**Note:**

Black underlined words take you to links within this eBook.

Blue underlined words take you to external Internet links.

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# What is career well-being?

**Career well-being** is the most important element of your overall well-being, and there are a number of steps you can take to strengthen it. First, though, you want to be clear on what we are talking about. High career well-being is when you can give a strong “**Yes!**” to the question, “**Do you like what you do each day?**” (Rath, Harter 2010).

## Career well-being includes more than paid work

Things you do that contribute to career well-being might be paid or unpaid work; pursuing a career or college major; volunteering for a social cause; or pursuing a particular vocation, sport or hobby.

When you do them you are strengthening your:

- Physical vitality,
- Mental eagerness,
- Social satisfaction, and
- A sense of meaning and accomplishment. (Learn more in [Notes](#))

Together, they strengthen your well-being. In doing them you feel pride, excitement, happiness, satisfaction, inspired, energized, or valued and worthwhile.

You want to build your life in a way that enables you to do the things you like to do.

You can do this with these life-building steps,

1. [Choose work that fits your interests and personality](#);
2. [Use your motivated skills, your unique strengths](#); and
3. [Become a free agent worker](#).

## How does career well-being affect your well-being?

**Well-being** is positive health and wellness that goes beyond the absence of disease or mental illness. It includes,

- Physical well-being (feeling very healthy, full of energy),
- Engagement (absorption in what you are doing),
- Meaning (what I do in life is valuable, worthwhile) ,
- Positive self-esteem,
- Optimism, resilience, and accomplishment
- Positive social relationships. (Learn more in [Notes](#))

Our knowledge of well-being comes primarily from a scientific analysis of data from the Gallup World Poll, a large, continuous, and diverse survey that includes 160 countries, covering 98% of the world's population.

Career well-being is one of five elements of well-being. The other four are social, financial, physical, and community well-being. The five are **interdependent**. They affect each other. They are universal across faiths, cultures, and nationalities.

Career well-being is the most influential of the five. **People who are high in it are twice as likely to be thriving in their lives overall!**

Unfortunately, however, only about 20% of the people give a strong “**Yes**” that they like what they are doing each day.

In “Wellbeing,” the book reporting these findings, the authors write,

*“At a fundamental level, we all need something to do, and ideally something to look forward to, when we wake up every day. What you spend your time doing each day shapes your identity, whether you are a student, parent, volunteer, retiree, or have a more conventional job . . .”*

# Strengthening your well-being: looking at the whole picture

**Interdependence.** As mentioned earlier, the five elements of well-being are interdependent. How you are doing in one affects the others. The Gallup study found that while 66% of the people were doing well in at least one of these areas, **only 7% were thriving in all five.**

So, ask yourself,

- Do I like what I do each day? Career Well-Being
- Do I have strong relationships and love in my life? Social Well-Being
- Am I effective in managing my economic life? Financial Well-Being
- Do I have the health and energy to do what I want to do? Physical Well-Being
- Am I engaged with my community where I live? Community Well-Being

Then, decide what to do. (Rath, Harter 2010).

**Moving toward a more thriving well-being.** The authors of “Wellbeing” express our thoughts well,

*“As we learned from those who are thriving, improving wellbeing in any one of the five areas takes work and accountability. But we hope that after reading this book, you will have a more holistic view of what contributes to your well being over a lifetime.*

*This will enable you to enjoy each day, get more out of life in general, and perhaps most importantly, boost the wellbeing of your friends, family members, colleagues, and others in your community.”*

# Strengthening your career well-being

## “Do you like what you do each day?” Getting to a strong “Yes!”

First, keep in mind that life is complicated and that we, ourselves, have limitations:

The “Wellbeing” authors write:

*“. . . the single biggest threat to our own wellbeing tends to be ourselves. Without even giving it much thought, we allow our short-term decisions to override what’s best for our long-term wellbeing.”*

In “Thinking, Fast and Slow,” Nobel prize winner Daniel Kahneman writes that,

*“. . . both experienced happiness and life satisfaction are largely determined by the genetics of temperament.”*

It is far more difficult for us to be rational than we think, and

*“. . . one recipe for a dissatisfied adulthood is setting goals that are especially difficult to attain.” (like, “becoming accomplished in a performing art”).*

### Our advice:

- Slow down, take your time to think things out,
- Focus on your strengths and long-term well-being, and
- Be well-informed.

Career Key's goal is to share with you the best science and practices of our field. We're proud of our award-winning efforts. (See [References](#)) In that spirit, we recommend the next sections in this eBook:

[Doing what you like to do — personality-environment fit](#)

[Introversion and happiness](#)

[Becoming a free agent worker](#)

[Using your motivated skills, your unique strengths](#)

[References and resources](#)

For other Career Key web articles, go to our [Site Map](#).



# Doing what you like to do — personality-environment fit

“Do you like what you do each day?” If your answer is “Yes”, you are likely doing something that interests you, that matches your “Holland” personality profile.

Many scientific studies show that this match-up, between your personality and work environment affects,

- Job satisfaction and performance,
- Students’ success and satisfaction.

Studies show that the match between college students’ personality and major affects their grades, whether they change their major, and whether they graduate on time. For more, read our free eBook (PDF): [Choose a College Major Based on Your Personality](#).

All of this research is based on the “Holland theory of vocational personalities and work environments”. Well over a thousand studies have investigated and validated its main ideas. ([Holland’s Theory of Career Choice and You](#))

## How do I find my personality-environment fit?

In a nutshell, there are six personality types — Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (abbreviated, R, I, A, S, E, C). And, there are six environments having the same RIASEC names.

An environment is created by the personalities of the people in it. So, if a work environment is made up primarily of people having an Artistic personality, together, they create an Artistic environment.

Artistic people generally thrive in this environment, they share similar values, skills, strengths, and interests. On the other hand, people having the opposite personality type, Conventional, do less well. Maybe you have experienced this?

Research shows that the degree of personality-environment fit is positively related to people's success and satisfaction. This degree of fit is called **congruence**.

If you are doing work that is **congruent** with your personality — that matches well with your interests, skills, and values — you are more likely to be happy and successful. Likewise, if your work involves working with others, you are likely to be happier in an environment of people who share your interests, values, and skills.

To determine your RIASEC personality profile, you want to take one of the few scientifically valid assessments that truly measure what they are supposed to (the RIASEC types), like [Career Key Discovery](#). You also want to use a list of careers, training programs, or majors that have been expertly classified according to the six RIASEC environments.

**Bottom line:** to strengthen your career well-being, choose work that fits your RIASEC personality profile — your interests, values, skills, and how you see yourself.

**Next page... Introversion and happiness**

# Introversion and happiness

In addition to the RIASEC personality types, there is a personality dimension that is related to career well-being — Introversion-Extraversion (I-E). In general, you will be happiest in an environment that fits where you are on the I-E scale. But in a world dominated by extroverts, this isn't always possible for introverts.

In her fascinating and helpful book, “Quiet,” Susan Cain discusses the strengths of introverts: how they can do well in an environment dominated by extroverts.

Be aware that positive emotions, like happiness, are heritable to some degree. So, you may be a limited to some extent in your ability to experience happiness if you are on the introvert end of scale.

For more go to,

[Introverts, Introversion — Tips for School and Job Success](#)

**Next page... Becoming a free agent worker**

# Becoming a free agent worker

An important way you can lead a more balanced and satisfying life, is to view paid work for what it is: an economic exchange. It is labor for pay. To the extent you have valuable, marketable skills you can be a “free agent”, just as athletes do on professional sports teams.

Marketable skills are the key. With skills that sell in the labor market, you are in control. You can earn more, quit an unsafe job, change to a better one, and find another one more easily if laid off. You can do those things that make you feel good.

You can also look for opportunities of self-fulfillment outside of your job, doing the things you like to do. You can also invest more in nurturing your social, financial, physical, and community well-being. More at,

[The Free Agent Outlook on Work.](#)

**Next page... Motivated skills**

## Using your motivated skills, your unique strengths

The skills you love using are a powerful guide for enhancing your career well-being.

Think about your past achievements, “good experiences”, over the past 2 – 5 years —the ones you feel you did well, enjoyed doing, feel proud of — what were the skills you used? Your motivated skills are among these.

To the extent you can, you want to use your motivated skills in what you do. More at,

[Identify Your Motivated Skills, Dependable Strengths.](#)

**Next page... Summary**

# Summary

Career well-being is one of five elements of well-being, and one of the most influential. The other four are social, financial, physical, and community well-being. The five are **interdependent**. They affect each other. They are universal across faiths, cultures, and nationalities.

Start with some of the resources we suggest, like,

Personality-Environment Fit

Introversion and Happiness

Free Agent Workers

Motivated Skills and Unique Strengths

Now that you know more about career well-being, you can likely think of unique ways to improve yours that fit you best.

We hope we've helped you a little further down the path toward doing more of what you love to do - career well-being.

**Next page... About Career Key**

# About Career Key

Career Key's self-service career counseling and academic advising solutions empower youth and adults to clarify career and education direction. Millions of people have relied on its validated personality assessment to match them with careers and programs of study. Through their Career Key match, people find their path to career well-being.

Please visit [Career Key](#) to learn more about what we do.

**Next page... References and notes: more about these ideas**

# References and notes

## Books

Cain, S. (2013). "Quiet, The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking." New York: Random House.

Kahneman, D. (2011). "Thinking, Fast and Slow." New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Rath, T. & Harter, J. (2010). "Wellbeing: The five essential elements." New York: Gallup.

Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). "Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being." New York: Simon and Schuster.

## Career Key

Career Key's recommended web articles in this eBook originated with "The Encyclopedia of Career Change and Work Issues," which received the prestigious "Outstanding Reference Source" award by the American Library Association. A leading expert in the field wrote each self-help article. The web articles are frequently updated and new ones are added. [About the author and editor.](#)

## Notes: more about these ideas

### Meaning

"Meaning" is related to what might be called "Spiritual Well-Being." A leader in the field, Dr. Martin Seligman, notes in his book "Flourish,"

*"... there is considerable evidence that a higher level of spirituality goes hand in hand with greater well-being, less mental illness, less substance abuse, and more stable marriages." (pg. 149).*



Similarly, the “Wellbeing” authors note that,

*“. . . people take different paths to increasing their individual well-being. For many people, spirituality drives them in all these areas. Their faith is the most important facet of their lives, and it is the foundation of their daily efforts. For others a deep mission, such as protecting the environment, inspires them each day.” Rath, T. & Harter, J. (2010), pg. 7.*

## Defining well-being

The science of well-being is evolving and encouraging. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) gives an excellent [summary](#) of what is known today, including:

*“There is no consensus around a single definition of well-being, but there is a general agreement that at minimum, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning.*

*In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good. For public health purposes, physical well-being (e.g., feeling very healthy and full of energy) is also viewed as critical to overall well-being” (pg. 2).*