A Flourishing State of the Soul: 
*Turning Aristotle’s Eudaimonic Philosophy into Sustainable Health Behavior Change Programs*

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**Today’s Key Ideas**

1. Dominant paradigm/model guiding health behavior change is generally ineffective but difficult to break free from  
   - Disease to behaviors to thoughts/beliefs/feelings to change

2. We need to break free with a well-being rebellion/uprising  
   - Feel to Be Well to Inner Spark to sustainable behavior change

3. Eudaimonia—our be well feel of things—is a core human gift that promotes more natural, sustainable health behavior change.  
   - The Elephant uprising has begun…
Today's Quest

- Introduction and Conventional Wisdom:
  - Brief Activity—Your Feel
  - Why a need for Eudaimonia?

- From Ancient Wisdom to Eudaimonic Well-Being Science:
  - Eudaimonia History, Philosophy, Science
  - Sample Interventions—youth and adults

- Eudaimonia and Health Behavior Change:
  - Eudaimonia is Experienced
  - Connecting My Feel to Behavior

The End Begins Here

-Front of Your Card:
- One UNIQUE thing about yourself
  - e.g., “To the best of my knowledge, I’m 100% Polish”
- A Favorite Place OR a Favorite Activity and how it makes you FEEL
  - e.g., “My favorite place is the basketball court because I love the feel of the swish.”
- Share your responses with a partner

Conventional Wisdom of Health Behavior Change
Leading Paradigm/Model of Health and Health Behavior Change

“To promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury and disability.”

—Part of Mission Statement of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Conventional Wisdom Beliefs for Changing Health Behavior

● People are rational and will change behavior to prevent disease
● Start with the behavior
● Change thoughts/beliefs to change behavior
● Change thoughts about feelings to change behavior

“...beliefs are the basic determinants of any behavior. It follows that, in the final analysis, behavior change is brought about by producing changes in beliefs.”

—Ajzen & Fishbein
Joe Neyer on Beliefs

“When I look to myself, I see what belief is constituted of: an idea taken in or taught and turned into belief as though it is absolutely true…we cannot see new today with the eyes of the past as lenses. We will only see what we already believe…and we will believe it again.”

“The whole blessed world we live in. It’s run by ghosts. We see what we see because these ghosts show it to us.”

--Robert Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

The ghosts of Descartes’s Beliefs
Rene Descartes

- Late 1500s to mid 1600s
- “There is nothing included in the concept of body that belongs to the mind; and nothing of that in the mind that belongs to the body.”
- Material universe was a machine
- No purpose, life, or spirituality in matter
- He came up with this philosophy based on an illuminating vision from God
  - (Capra, 1982)

Dominant Paradigm

- Cartesian Philosophy/Scientific Method
- Applied to Health as:
  - The Biomedical Model
    - Helped to eradicate communicable diseases in Era 1.0
    - Applied to chronic disease and behavior change in Era 2.0

Biomedical Model Beliefs

- Prevention
- Experts/Authority
- Information/Education
- Prescription
- Compliance
- Adherence
Biomedical Rules

- “Biomedical research community has pursued a narrative positing that a combination of ever-deeper knowledge of subcellular biology, especially genetics, coupled with information technology will lead to transformative improvements in health care and human health.”
  - In 2016, $15 billion of the NIH $26 billion in funding went towards biomedical research
- “None of these popular topics has had any measurable effect on population mortality, morbidity, or life expectancy in the United States.”
  --Joyner, Paneth, & Ioannidis, *JAMA*, 2016

So how’s the conventional wisdom working for us?

Health Trends

- Between 1999 and 2014, premature mortality increased in white individuals and in American Indians and Alaska Natives—*Lancet*, 2017
- Obesity increase is an “epidemic.” --*JAMA*
- Percent of adults 18 years of age and over who met the Physical Activity Guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity: 20.9%  
  --National Center for Health Statistics
- Only 2.7% of all Americans follow advice to keep weight off, exercise regularly, eat five or more servings of fruits/vegetables each day, and avoid smoking
  --*Archives of Internal Medicine*
Health Trends

- Increases in obesity and decreases in physical activity are the leading driver in increases of musculoskeletal disorders worldwide. *Lancet*, 2015

- “Trends in young people are a bellwether for the future disease burden,” said Siegel. “Our finding that colorectal cancer risk for millennials has escalated back to the level of those born in the late 1800s is very sobering. Educational campaigns are needed to alert clinicians and the general public about this increase to help reduce delays in diagnosis, which are so prevalent in young people, but also to encourage healthier eating and more active lifestyles to try to reverse this trend.”

  —Cancer.org, 2017, based on study in *Journal of National Cancer Institute*.

More Health Trends

- 25% to 33% of Americans report sleep problems
- Researchers surveyed more than 26,000 Americans, and found that adults had sex about nine fewer times a year in 2010-2014 than in 1995-1999. —*Archives of Sexual Behavior*
- Less than 9 percent of Americans eat two to three cups of vegetables every day as recommended
- More than 75% of all physician office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints—*APA*
  - “Distressed individuals are more likely to have health habits that put them at greater risk for disease.”

  *Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser, Annual Review of Psychology*

Teens & Health Behaviors

- 91% do NOT eat 5 or more daily servings of fruits & vegetables
- 73% spend more than 2 hours daily in front of TV or computer
- 75% of adolescents do NOT participate in the recommended 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous daily physical activity
- 86% drink sugar-sweetened drinks
  *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey*
Can Conventional Wisdom get people to change health behavior?

"Most intervention studies though demonstrating the ability to alter behavior, either do not test, or when tested do not demonstrate, sustained behavior change."

– Institute of Medicine

Ineffectiveness of Exercise Interventions

"Increases in physical activity or fitness associated with the interventions were diminished as time passed after the intervention ended.”

Dishman & Buckworth
Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise

Diet Interventions

● “Significant weight loss was observed with any low-carbohydrate or low-fat diet.”
  – JAMA, 2014

● Many highlighted that diets were impossible to stick to, but were successful as long as you remained on them:
  – "They all work…when you stick to them. It’s when you go off them that they don’t.”

● Blamed themselves:
  – “I’m not committed enough”
  – Nutrition Journal
Youth Physical Activity Interventions

- “Strong evidence shows that physical activity interventions have little effect on the overall physical activity of children.”
  - Metcalf et al., 2012, p. 6, British Medical Journal

Conventional Wishing Prevails

“In present times, the biomedical tradition of disease prevention still dominates the field of public health and remains even more powerful than 50 years ago.”
--Nettleton, 2006

Conventional Wisdom is Probably Conventional Wishing

Why?

- Promotes a Human Stagnation Path that is demotivating
  - Threat, Defence, Prevention, Low life satisfaction

- Experts and Science are usually wrong or misleading (e.g., STREETLIGHT EFFECT & Fishing in a Bathtub)
  - “Experts are rarely interested in getting at truth, whatever it may be. What they want to do is prove that certain things are true.”
    - David Freedman, Wrong
Conventional Wisdom is Probably Conventional Wishing

Why?

- Assumes that behavior is primarily controlled by conscious processes
  - "Conscious, rational thought is a bit player in the drama that is our mental life." - John Coates, *The Hour Between Dog and Wolf*
- We do not know ourselves very well
  - Our thoughts/beliefs/feelings about ourselves and health behaviors actually get in the way of a more natural change process (e.g., COGNITIVE EASE, Lack of Self-Awareness, Overconfidence)
    - Kahnemann, Lane, & Kruger & Dunning

Conventional Wisdom is Probably Conventional Wishing

Why?

- Commercial aspect of health behavior change feeds these thoughts/beliefs/feelings (e.g., MUSIC PRIMING IN RESTAURANTS)
  - If we:
    - Are Unaware
    - Look in the wrong places
    - Hold on to our beliefs
    - Tell ourselves stories to make us feel better
    - Give ourselves up to quasi-experts

What are we to do?
The Need for a Revolution

"The current situation now calls for a third health revolution on the basis of a view of health as a resource for every day life...Health thus betokens not only the ability to do the things one wants to do in everyday life but also the reserves to maintain that ability...Building health in this sense constitutes the third revolution in health.

--Dr. Lester Breslow

Something More

"There must be something more than emotion, thought, and behavior that goes to make up the man."

--George Kelly (1955)
“What is that something more?”
What would compel people to do the healthy behaviors and avoid the risky ones?”

Eureka! It’s Eudaimonia

EUDAIMONIA
“A flourishing state of the soul”
--Aristotle, The Well-Being Man!
Eudaimonic Well-Being

- Realization of one’s true potential
  - Gifts, talents, magic
- Personal expressiveness
- Living in truth to oneself or true nature
- Living in harmony with one’s daimon or innate potentiality
- “individual experiences the whole of his life in every act.” (Norton, 1976)

Eudaimonic Well-Being

- Eudaimonia:
  - YOU-DAY-MOAN-EE-AH

Eudaimonic well-being appears to be more focused on a process for experiencing optimal life functioning that is sustainable over a long period of time

“...an inner quality that gives rise to particular health practices but cannot in itself be reduced to those practices...an ongoing process of self-discovery, manifesting a positive influence on the world around us.”

--Ken Pelletier

Sound Mind, Sound Body
Eudaimonia and Health

“It is individuals with positive purpose who are likely to sustain practices of taking care of themselves. Simply put, taking good care of oneself in terms of daily health practices presupposes a life that is worth taking care of.”

--Ryff & Singer
Psychological Inquiry

Eudaimonic Well-Being, Health, and Health Behaviors

The Health Impact of Eudaimonia

Ryff et al., 2004

- The experience of eudaimonia—without any change in traditional health behaviors—enhances a person’s physical health.
  - Eudaimonia linked to key biomarkers for physical health in older women
    - Better sleep, enhanced immune functioning, lower cardiovascular risk
Eudaimonic Well-Being & Health Biomarkers

Ryan & Frederick (1997)
Eudaimonia strongly related to better body functioning, fewer illness symptoms, sustained changes in BMI

The Health Impact of Eudaimonia

Steptoe et al. (2008)
- The experience of eudaimonia is associated with fewer sleep problems for both men and women ages 58-72.

Boehm & Kubzansky (2012)
- Japanese adults with a greater sense of eudaimonia (ikigai) had a diminished risk of cardiovascular-related death over 11 years
  - ikigai—"Why I wake up in the morning"

Eudaimonia and Physical Activity

- "Numerous cross-sectional studies from adolescents to the elderly suggest that individuals with the highest levels of well-being are more likely to be physically active."
  --Boehm, Vie, & Kubzansky, 2012
Eudaimonia & Teen Health

Schwartz et al. (2011):
- Eudaimonic well-being was negatively related to:
  - Frequency of marijuana use
  - Inhalant use
  - Prescription drug use
  - Riding with an impaired driver

Hoyt et al. (2012):
- Positive well-being measured prospectively strongly predicted:
  - Reduced participation in risky behaviors
    - Cigarettes, binge drinking, marijuana

The power of eudaimonic feel of living

- Health biomarkers
- Health-risk behaviors
- Health-promoting behaviors

But What Really is Eudaimonic Well-Being?

- Ryan and Colleagues (2008):
  “not so much an outcome or an end state as it is a process of fulfilling one’s daimon or true nature—that is, of fulfilling one’s virtuous potentials and living as one was intended to live.”
  
  Eudaimonia is a lived experience
The Eudaimonic FEEL of Health

- “People do not change their minds based on what they know; they change based on what they feel.” (Dr. Oz, 2012)

- “It’s how these activities make me feel: more energized, less stressed, more productive, more engaged and, yes, happier…” (Jane Brody, 2012)

- “Health is a person’s subjective experience of being in a positive state of well-being.”
  – Langeland & Vinje (2013)

Let’s go a little further

- “A deeper conception of how a person experiences oneself” (Hoffman et al., 2009)

- “The felt apperceptive mass to which we can inwardly point” (Gendlin, 1962)

- You FEEL Eudaimonia—when you feel personally expressive, alive, vital, free

Eudaimonic Well-Being

It’s about FEEL, not feelings or emotions or thoughts or beliefs
Eudaimonia and Health
Behavior Change
Trying it

Where to Start?

“The big question is whether you are going to be able to say a hearty yes to your adventure…the adventure of the hero—the adventure of being alive.”

--Joseph Campbell
The Power of Myth

So Where to Start?

Behaviors of interest
OR
Person of interest
How do I find and engage in life activities that are meaningful, fun, and healthy?

The Human Development Path

Eudaimonic Well-Being Process
Eudaimonic Well-Being Questions

1. How do I want to feel?
2. What does it take to get that feel?
3. What keeps me from that feel?
4. How can I get it back?
5. What am I willing to work for?

Eudaimonia and Health Behavior Change

- Non prescriptive
- Freedom
- Don’t start by defining the health behaviors people should do
- The health behaviors are performed to help people experience how they want to feel
- Health behaviors will change more naturally and organically

Eudaimonia Enhancement with Adults

- Week 1 Priming the Feel
  - Participants are introduced to the idea that how they feel matters.
- Week 2 Paying Attention to Feel
  - Participants experienced how it feels to become their own expert and to collect their own feel data.
- Week 3 Living Healthy and Feel
  - Participants brainstormed healthy living ideas and connected those ideas to how they want to feel.
- Week 4 Embracing the Feel
  - Participants experienced how societal pressures can undermine their own experience of feel.
Eudaimonia Enhancement with Adults

- **Week 5 Gaming the Feel**
  - In small groups, participants invented a new physical activity game/sport to experience the role that feel and feeling free plays in their lives.

- **Week 6 Sensing the Feel**
  - Group members connected their senses to feel as a way of becoming more aware of how “feel” plays the role of a sense in their day to day living.

- **Week 7 Producing the Feel**
  - Participants created and designed themselves as a new product and shared that product with the group.

- **Week 8 Revisiting the Feel**
  - Participants brought in photos and other personally meaningful examples of how to revisit or reenergize their feel when obstacles challenge how they want to feel.

Eudaimonia & Physical Activity

Lewis, Kimiecik, Horn, Zullig, & Ward (2014):

- Study evaluated a eudaimonic-enhancement process with university employees
- Results:
  - Enhanced vitality and self-determination
  - Increased physical activity measured by daily steps
    - 6,209 to 7,755 steps (moved from sedentary to moderate activity category)
  - Vitality and autonomy were key variables
WBW sessions and activities

- Meet Your Mentor (Auditeria)
- Being YOUnique and Favorite Place
- Name-The-Feel-Game—Pictionary
- Game with No Name
- Sensing the Feel
- Embracing Obstacles to Well-Being
- FEELing Healthy
- Closing Celebration (Auditeria)

VIDEO

Results

- Pre-Post
  - Increase in eating green salad and carrots
  - Increase in physical activity

- Other (Kimiecik & Horn, 2016)
  - Strong relationships between feelings of autonomy, competence and vitality and health behaviors (juice, salad, pop, and physical activity)

Does how you FEEL impact:

How you perform?
How you interact with friends and family?
When and what you eat?
When, how, and if you exercise?
How much and quality of your sleep?
The Beginning Starts Here

Front of Your Card:
- One UNIQUE thing about yourself
  - e.g., “To the best of my knowledge, I’m 100% Polish.”
- A Favorite Place OR a Favorite Activity and how it makes you FEEL
  - e.g., “My favorite place is the basketball court because I love the feel of the wood.”

Share your responses with a partner

Back of Your Card:
- With your partner brainstorm ways that you can connect how you like to feel with the health behavior of your choice...
- Write down your ideas on the your card
- Share in groups
- Share with everyone

Remember

“...Our own body is the greatest perceptive instrument ever designed. Not only can it perceive sound, light, movement, temperature, aroma, taste, and time, but it possesses all the processing capacity and speed to organize, categorize, and express that mass of data almost instantly, to then retain and reorganize it, and to find utility and value and meaning.”

—Scott Huler
Defining the Wind

Our Rider
Swede-Romano-Tibetan, Doing Good
Undergraduate, Better Understanding
Step-on Track
Learn the Education Toolbox
Facts Not Dull, Good Enough

Our Elephant
Swede-Filipino, Long-term, Doing Good
Undergraduate, Better Thinking
Step-on Track
Learn the Education Toolbox
Facts Not Dull, Good Enough

The 3rd Revolution Mission Statement

“To enhance Eudaimonic Well-Being, which will more naturally enhance health behavior change and quality of life leading to the prevention and control of disease, injury, and disability.”

--Kimiecik, late night