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| **The experiential learning theory of high level wellness, health and happiness** |
| **Background/Objectives**We tend to have a good understanding of the factors that contribute to high level wellness, health and happiness; including healthy food, physical activity, supportive relationships, and equitable access to money, power and resources. However few people appear to be flourishing, suggesting that this information has not translated into high level wellness for all. Qualitative research could provide new perspectives on what this way of being is, and how people attain and maintain it. This study aimed to explore this possibility, by developing an original theory directly from participant data.**Methods**Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 Australian adults who reported a high or very high level of wellness, health and happiness. This data was analysed through codes and memos that sought to understand relevant patterns, and the ways that these patterns might relate to each other. This approach was consistent with a constructivist grounded theory research method.**Results**This process led to the development of a new experiential learning theory of high level wellness. This theory suggests that high level wellness is the sense of peace (wellbeing) that comes from knowing, liking and being one’s best self. Tuning into the presence or absence of this sensation prompts some people to move towards the people, places, perceptions and practices that align with their needs, values, energisers, strengths and joys; away from those that don’t. There are three steps in this circular experiential learning process: (1) assessing the situation, (2) trying an action and reviewing the consequences, and (3) integrating lessons. This self-initiated learning process requires self-commitment, reflection on inner and outer circumstances, and the ability to become one’s best (not perfect) self—including access to relevant resources.**Discussion**This theory connects existing concepts (e.g., self-actualisation, salutogenesis and eudaimonic wellbeing) to a novel conceptualisation of experiential learning, and a quiet sense of peace as an inner compass. Researchers and practitioners could explore the practical applications of this theory by helping individuals and communities to design, implement and evaluate their own experiential learning process, accompanied by broader efforts to ensure that everyone can access relevant resources (e.g., affordable housing and liveable incomes). **Keywords**High level wellnessQualitative researchSalutogenesis |