

THE FIVE DOMAINS OF WELLBEING

All of us—from janitor to judge, senior executive to senior citizen, adult to adolescent—share a set of universal needs that are critical in combination for health and hope. These are what the Full Frame Initiative defines as the Five Domains of Wellbeing.

We all need:

- **social connectedness** to people and communities, in ways that allow us to give as well as to receive;
- **stability** that comes from having things we can count on to be the same from day to day, and knowing that a small bump won't set off a domino-effect of crises;
- **safety**, the ability to be ourselves without significant harm;
- **mastery**, feeling that we can influence what happens to us, and having the skills to navigate and negotiate life; and
- **meaningful access to relevant resources** to meet our basic needs without shame, danger or great difficulty.

While we share a common need for assets in these domains, each of us experiences the domains in different and deeply personal ways, influenced by many factors, including our personal history, race, gender, age, community, family, values and context. A returning veteran may feel physically vulnerable sitting in traffic. A young black man may face extra scrutiny from security guards at a department store when he's buying clothes for school. A pick-up soccer game might give one person a sense of belonging and connectedness, but make another feel awkward and isolated.



Yet many people, families and communities living at the intersection of poverty, violence and trauma face constant threats to their wellbeing, and services designed to help them address a challenge in one domain—gaining access to housing for example—rarely are set up to take into consideration the tradeoffs that might be an unintended by-product of this progress. And sometimes those tradeoffs aren't worth it, and so the progress doesn't stick. For example, if turning down available housing automatically disqualifies a person who is homeless from other housing options, the system has decided housing is "worth it," no matter what the cost of the tradeoff. But what if taking that housing means a mother has to move across the state, away from her job and the grandmother who provides care to her child who has a disability? That housing placement probably won't last, even if she takes it.

Those same factors also influence what we are (or are not) willing to give up in order to increase our wellbeing. Increasing wellbeing doesn't happen by making progress in each single domain independently. The domains are interconnected. Sometimes, building assets in one domain means giving up something we value in another: a tradeoff. We all ask ourselves, "Is it worth it?" Is it worth it to take a job that gives me a big raise? If it means waking up 20 minutes earlier, maybe so. But if it means always missing visiting hours at a parent's nursing home, maybe not.

Sometimes we can find a way to minimize the tradeoff so that what wasn't worth it before, now is: convincing the nursing home to make an exception for visiting after hours twice a week. Being able both to decide for ourselves what's "worth it," and to navigate life in ways that build our assets and minimize tradeoffs, fosters wellbeing.

To create change that *will* last, systems and services must help people minimize tradeoffs and build assets in the **Five Domains of Wellbeing**. Doing so will begin to break the cycles of poverty, violence and trauma that undermine wellbeing for us all.



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The Full Frame Initiative is a social change organization that partners with pioneering organizations, systems and communities across the country to fundamentally shift their focus from fixing problems to fostering wellbeing – the needs and experiences essential for health and hope. Together, we are creating possibilities for lasting change in people's lives and sparking a broader movement that replaces poverty, violence, trauma and oppression with wellbeing and justice.

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