

Integrated Wellbeing Model (IWM) and Mindfulness

By Dr Sunita Rai

A) The Role of Mindfulness

Intentions and Attention

Mindfulness emphasises the pivotal role of intentions in directing attention. Often, we navigate life without recognising how our intentions—both conscious and unconscious—shape our focus. For example, when we set an intention to approach situations with curiosity, our attention shifts towards positive aspects, such as new opportunities in a challenging task. Conversely, intentions influenced by fear or worry may highlight stressors, like focusing only on potential failure.

An example can be seen in workplace dynamics. If an employee enters a meeting intending to learn and collaborate, they are likely to notice supportive colleagues or creative ideas. However, if their intention is clouded by doubt, they may only perceive criticism or conflict. By becoming aware of our intentions, we can purposefully align our focus with what truly matters, enhancing our experiences and relationships.

Overcoming Negativity Bias

The human brain is wired for negativity bias, prioritising threats and negative information as an evolutionary survival mechanism. While this trait was beneficial in prehistoric times, it often overshadows positive experiences in modern life. For instance, a student who scores 95% on a test might fixate on the 5% they got wrong, rather than celebrating their achievement.

Through mindfulness practice, individuals can identify these automatic patterns of negative thinking. By consciously acknowledging both positive and negative elements, they can develop a more balanced perspective. For example, keeping a gratitude journal can help shift focus to the positives, such as kind acts from a friend or small personal victories.

B) The Role of Wellbeing: Integrated Wellbeing Model (IWM)

The Integrated Wellbeing Model (IWM) offers a structured approach to cultivating wellbeing across multiple dimensions of the self: **physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual**. By addressing these interconnected aspects, individuals can achieve a holistic and sustained sense of fulfilment.



Dr. Sunita Rai (2018)

1. Spatial Self

The spatial self pertains to the physical environment and the relationship with one's body. Consider your living space: Does it support your wellbeing? For instance, incorporating indoor plants like snake plants can purify air and boost mood, while arranging furniture to promote open conversations fosters family bonding.

Vacations or nature walks can also rejuvenate your spatial self. For example, a weekend getaway to a serene location might provide mental clarity and stress relief. On a personal level, how do you feel about your body? Practicing self-care, like wearing colours that uplift your mood—yellow for cheerfulness or blue for calmness—can have subtle but meaningful impacts.

2. Physical Self

Physical wellbeing encompasses activity and physiological health. For example, regular exercises like yoga or brisk walking can improve energy levels and reduce stress. A working professional might schedule 30-minute walks during lunch breaks, balancing work and physical activity.

Diet and relaxation are equally important. Nutrient-dense meals like quinoa salads or smoothies provide essential energy. Similarly, prioritising restorative sleep (7.5-9 hours) enhances both physical and mental health. Imagine a teacher who struggles with sleep incorporating a bedtime routine of herbal tea and mindfulness meditation to unwind.

3. Emotional Self

Emotions shape our daily lives. Reflect on the emotions you frequently experience. Are they primarily positive, like joy and enthusiasm, or more challenging, such as frustration? For instance, a parent might find joy in playing with their child but experience stress when juggling work and parenting responsibilities.

Cultivating emotional regulation can involve practices like awareness of breath during moments of anger. Another example is building support networks. A student struggling with anxiety might join a peer support group, gaining encouragement and strategies for coping.

4. Intellectual Self

The intellectual self relates to pursuing life goals with competence. It includes acquiring skills, knowledge, and values. For example, a young entrepreneur might enrol in an online business course to refine their decision-making and leadership skills. Similarly, leveraging personal strengths, such as creativity, can solve complex challenges, like designing innovative marketing campaigns.

Questions to reflect upon include: What skills should I develop? Which relationships should I nurture? A software developer, for instance, might decide to focus on mastering AI technologies while dedicating time to mentorship relationships within their team.

5. Eudaimonic Self

Eudaimonia focuses on purpose and meaning in life. Consider activities that align with your values. For example, an individual passionate about animal welfare might volunteer at a shelter, finding joy in supporting a cause they believe in. Engaging in such meaningful pursuits fosters fulfilment.

Helping others find purpose is equally rewarding. For instance, a teacher guiding students to discover their talents and career paths creates a ripple effect of purpose-driven growth. Studies show that individuals with a clear sense of purpose report higher levels of life satisfaction and resilience.

Reflections

By integrating these dimensions, the IWM provides a roadmap for nurturing personal and communal wellbeing. From designing supportive environments to fostering intellectual growth, each step contributes to a resilient and meaningful life. Mindfulness, paired with the principles of IWM, empowers individuals to thrive holistically, turning everyday actions into opportunities for growth and connection.