

Research reveals new approach to understanding our wellbeing

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The ability to connect and feel a sense of belonging are basic human needs but new Swansea University research has examined how these are determined by more than just our personal relationships.

Research led by psychologist Professor Andrew Kemp, of the College of Human and Health Sciences, highlights the importance of taking a wider approach to wellbeing and how it can be influenced by issues such as inequality and anthropogenic climate change.

Professor Kemp worked with Ph.D. student Jess Mead and consultant clinical psychologist Dr. Zoe Fisher, of the University's Health and Wellbeing Academy, on the study which presents a transdisciplinary framework to help understand and improve wellbeing.

Professor Kemp said: "We define wellbeing as positive psychological experience, promoted by connections to self, community and environment, supported by healthy vagal function, all of which are impacted by socio-contextual factors that lie

beyond the control of the individual."

The researchers say their latest findings, which have just been published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, are particularly topical as society looks to recover and learn from COVID-19.

He said: "Our framework has already contributed to a better understanding of how to protect wellbeing during the pandemic and has led to the development of an innovative wellbeing science intervention, targeting [university students](#) and people living with acquired brain injury."

Professor Kemp added: "We feel our invited paper is timely as it not only aligns with a post-pandemic future that requires societal transformation, but it also picks up on global efforts to promote planetary wellbeing.

"Globalization, urbanization and technological advancements have meant that humans have become increasingly disconnected from nature. This continues despite research showing that contact with nature improves wellbeing."

The research reveals the advantages to health and wellbeing derived from connecting to oneself, others and nature and emphasizes a need for focused efforts to tackle major societal issues that affect our capacity for connection.

He added: "The poorest are disproportionately impacted by major societal challenges including increasing burden of chronic disease, societal loneliness and anthropogenic climate change.

"Economic inequality has adverse impacts on the entire population, not just the poor, so improving [economic inequality](#) is fundamental to improving population wellbeing."

Taking a transdisciplinary approach to the topic of [wellbeing](#) is something currently reflected across

Swansea University, particularly since the opening of the Morgan Advanced Studies Institute (MASI) which is dedicated to supporting transformative interdisciplinary research.

More information: Moving beyond disciplinary silos toward a transdisciplinary model of wellbeing: An invited review. *Frontiers in Psychology*. DOI: [10.3389/fpsyg.2021.642093](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.642093)

Provided by Swansea University

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