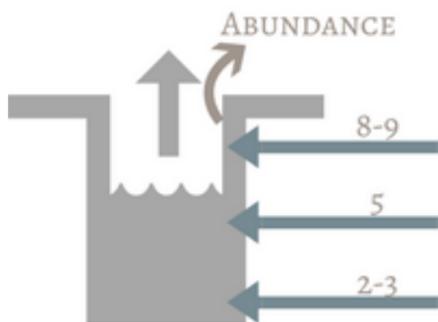


The Wellness Gauge



One of my favourite tools to use with people looking to make change is the Well Analogy and Wellness Gauge.

The basic concept is that we as humans have input and output. If we look at ourselves as a Well in terms of energy, and how we are feeling, we can begin to

gauge what life is like at different levels of wellbeing.

This tool ends up being the foundation for all future work and change. It is used as a regular check in, as a guideline for setting (and maintaining) boundaries and as a way to explore which behaviours maintain self- defeating outcomes OR which ones lead to success. Download the blank wellness gauge handout to print and use regularly as you try new strategies.

The key to really defining wellness is to look at how your whole body feels and behaves at different levels. Describe when your well is full (8-10), when it is half full (5) and when you are hitting the bottom (2-3). Think about how your body feels - do you have aches and pains or feel pain free, do you have high energy or low energy, how is your digestion, are you having headaches/jaw clenching/teeth grinding, what is your desire for physical contact?

Next look at how your thoughts are impacted by your wellness, do you have rapid, scattered thoughts or clear and paced thinking, is your thinking irrational or rational, are you having worry/negative thoughts or are you thinking positive thoughts.

Then move into your mood - are you happy and hopeful or sad and hopeless, are you angry or supportive of others? In terms of relationships, are you having quality time or are you preoccupied, are you communicating in a positive way or starting arguments, are you feeling connected to your partner/family or isolating yourself?

Check in on your sleeping habits at different levels of wellness - are you getting solid sleep or broken sleep, how many hours are you getting, how do you feel when you wake up? And finally check in on the food choices you are making, are you choosing healthy food and regular meals

or unhealthy food and random snacking, how much emotional eating is taking place, is your weight either increasing or decreasing?

The goal is to know all of these things for three different levels of wellness:

8-10 The Well is FULL: This would likely be after you have had some vacation time or really slow time at work. You may have had a lot of connection with family and friends. You may have been sleeping and eating well for a good period of time. You may have had a lot of good exercise or time outdoor. You feel fully rested and are at the top of your game.

Think about how you feel in each area of the chart when you're between 8-10.

5 - Half Full - Warning Signs: What do you feel like when your well is half full (or empty, depending on how you look at it). We know that once our well is half empty it is a slippery sloop down. Think about times you have been half full - maybe when work is steady busy, less time to spend on exercise and nutrition, less time with family and friends. Think about what each category is like for you at a five.

2-3 The Bottom of the Well: This may be what you experience after high stress/role overload. This is likely happening when you have too much to do and you have neglected your sleeping, exercise and connections with family and friends. You have likely let your boundaries for self-care slip in exchange for meeting the needs of others. You know that you're not your best and you are close to really burning out. Think about how what each category is like for you at this level.

I know that some people may have never experienced a 2-3 (good for you!) or may have never experienced an 8-10 (unfortunately that is common). If you haven't (or haven't in a long time) try to remember what it was like or imagine what it will be like.

Once you have created a measure for your whole self at different levels of wellness, it is time to start checking in on a regular basis. What level are you starting your day at? What level are you at by mid-morning/lunch/afternoon break/getting home from work/dinner/night?

Remember that every contact you have, every task you attend to, every errand you run is an output. Your well slowly diminishes over time and you need to add self-care continuously to keep that well full. It is easier to keep topping up than it is to fill up from the bottom.