

Weaving Well-Being

4th Class

Tools of Resilience

Teacher Resource Book

by Fiona Forman & Mick Rock





Weaving Well-Being



THE MORE YOU WEAVE... THE BETTER YOU FEEL!

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Part 1: Introduction to Weaving Well-Being

About the Authors

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Background to Programme

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Aims of the Programme

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Teacher Well-Being

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What SPHE strands and strand units are covered?

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Structure and Methodologies





Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



About the Authors

Fiona Forman



Fiona is a Primary School Teacher from Dublin. She graduated from St. Patrick's College, Dublin in 1987 and since then has taught all class levels, including resource and learning support. She holds an honours B.Ed. Degree and a Diploma in Montessori Education. She has worked as a Teaching Practice supervisor of student teachers of St. Patrick's College, Dublin. Fiona is also a trained and experienced facilitator of the Rainbows programme which supports children who have experienced loss.

Fiona's keen interest in children's well-being and mental health led her to undertake a M.Sc. in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) with the University of East London. As a result of her studies, she began to introduce practical and child-centred Positive Psychology concepts into her classroom, with highly positive feedback from children and parents alike. She then began her collaboration with co-author Mick Rock on the creation of the **Weaving Well-Being** programme.

Fiona has delivered talks on children's well-being to teachers and parents. She has spoken about her classroom experience and research at Féilte (A Celebration of Teaching and Learning). She is a regular media contributor on her experience of putting well-being and mental health at the heart of the classroom.

Fiona is also the mother of two teenage children. She feels passionate about equipping children with evidence-based life-skills to allow them to develop resilience and to thrive and flourish.

Mick Rock



Mick is a qualified Executive and Life Coach and a Motivational Speaker who has helped hundreds of people to enhance their lives and achieve a wide variety of goals. As the parent of two sons, Mick is extremely passionate about working with and helping children to deal with the various challenges in their lives, to increase their happiness and well-being and to fulfil their true potential.

Mick has a wide range of qualifications in the area of Personal Development. He completed a three year M.Sc. in Applied Positive Psychology with the University of East London (with distinction). His final dissertation was a research project on the use of Positive Psychology Interventions in Primary Schools.

Together with his wife Linda, who is a Primary School Teacher, he set up New Horizons Montessori School in 2002 and this has become established as one of the leading Montessori Schools in North Dublin. He has worked with children's charities and served as the Chairperson of the Board of Management of a Primary School for four years.

Mick is also the owner of Act Now, a company that delivers motivational talks, training programmes and one to one coaching to adult participants. These sessions have a strong focus on Positive Psychology Interventions. Before setting up Act Now he held various management roles including five years as Training and Development Manager within the financial services sector.



Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



Background to Programme

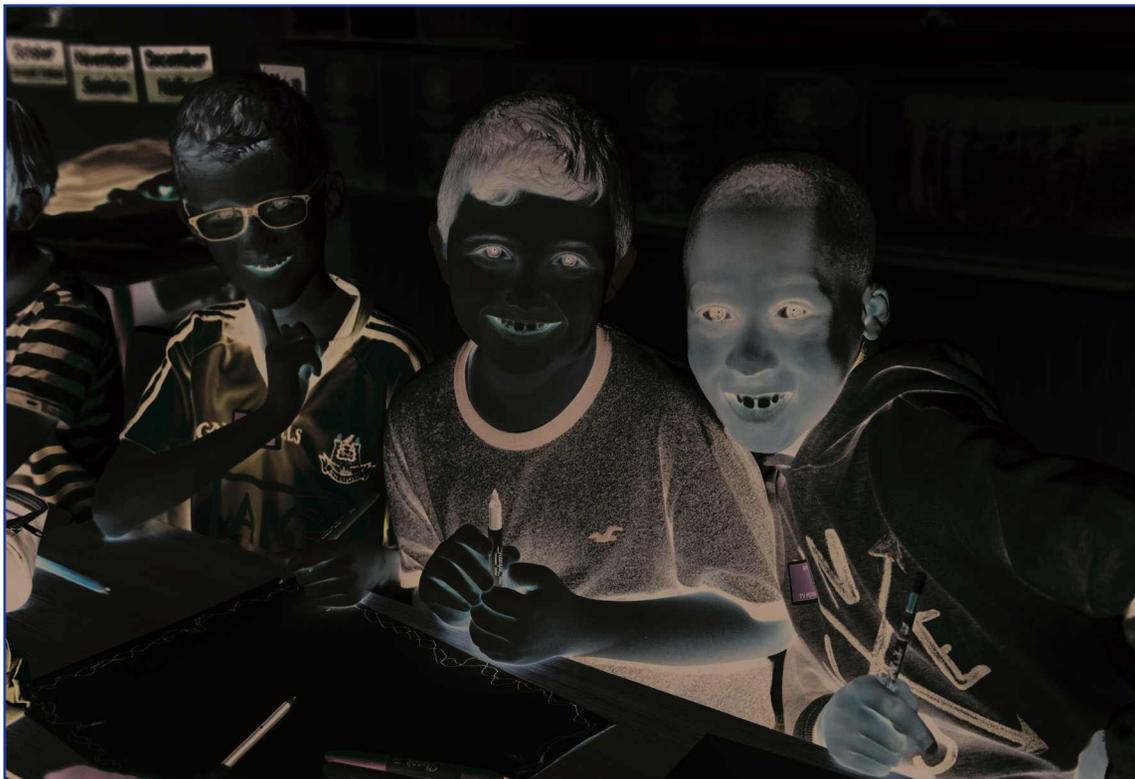
What is Well-Being?

'A state of Well-Being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities; can cope with the normal stresses of life; can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community'

This is the definition of well-being outlined by the DES in their 2015 *Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion; Well-Being in Primary Schools*.

A more child centred definition of well-being is used throughout this programme as follows:

“Well-being means feeling **good** and **strong** in our **minds** and **bodies**, having **energy**, getting along with and helping **others**, knowing our **strengths** and feeling **proud** because we are doing our **best**. It means we can **cope** with the little problems and disappointments of life. It means **enjoying** life, being **grateful** for what we have and **accepting ourselves** just as we are!”



A Self-Assessment Check-Up Table, using indicators based on this definition is provided at the back of the children's activity book. A copy is also included in this Teachers' Resource manual (SW11 - page 88). This is an optional tool that can be used by each teacher at their discretion.

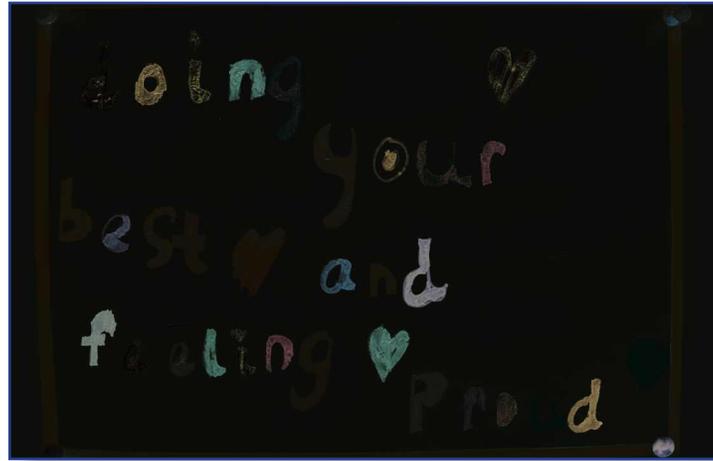


Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



Weaving Well-Being is an SPHE programme designed to teach children skills and strategies which develop positive mental health, and so promote well-being, in accordance with this definition. The skills are based on current research from the field of Positive Psychology.



Child's art showing one of the elements of well-being.

Framework of the Weaving Well-Being Programme

The chart below shows the main topics included in the full programme from second to sixth class. Due to the overlap of strands and strand units in the SPHE curriculum, there is room for a certain amount of flexibility regarding the suitability of the lessons for different class levels. Teachers could also decide to use the lessons in different year levels based on the specific needs and abilities of their individual classes.





Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



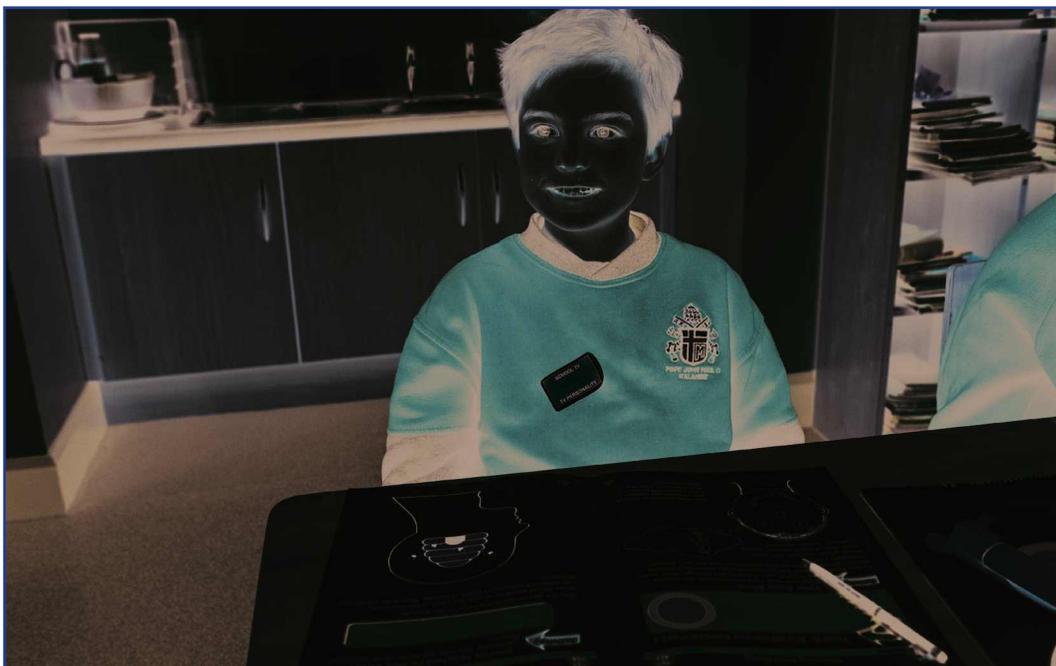
What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology. It was founded by Professor Martin Seligman, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, in 1998. Seligman observed that psychology up to that point was deficit based and overly focused on mental ill-health. He identified the need for more focus and research on the components of mental well-being. Therefore, Positive Psychology is the science of well-being, personal growth and resilience. It is founded on the concept of identifying and developing personal strengths, as opposed to correcting deficits. Positive Psychology uses evidence-based activities which help people not only to cope with everyday stresses but to flourish, grow and engage with life on an optimal level, whenever possible.

The lessons and activities in this programme are guided by Seligman's P.E.R.M.A. theory of well-being. The P.E.R.M.A. model identifies five particular components of well-being: *Positive Emotions, Engagement using Character Strengths, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement*.

Weaving Well-Being introduces children to many Positive Psychology strategies and activities which can empower them to become active participants in creating, maintaining and boosting positive mental health throughout their lives.

The fourth class programme consists of ten lessons which are designed to teach six specific skills of resilience. These are perspective, distraction, thought disputation, use of authentic character strengths, problem-focused planning and mindfulness. The final lesson is on a mindfulness based calming strategy (N.A.B.B.) which children can use if they need to calm down before choosing a tool.





Part 1

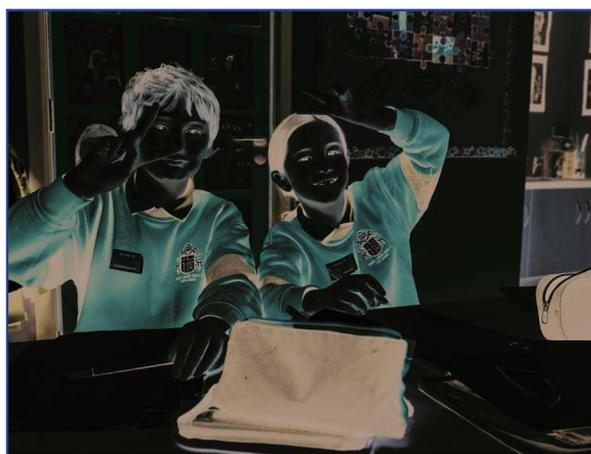
Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



The benefits of including specific well-being lessons in our classrooms

The **Weaving Well-Being** programme is designed to support and improve children's well-being across a number of areas - social, emotional, physical and psychological. Nurturing children's well-being in these areas can lead to increased academic performance, positive behaviour and better life outcomes¹.

Children today face a wide range of challenges which have a significant impact on their well-being and this is demonstrated by research completed in this area. One study showed that 2% of children aged 5 to 15 experienced a major depression² and another found that 14% of young people suffer from anxiety.³ The increase in anxiety and depression in young children also leads to delays in treatments with a recent HSE report⁴ showing that there was an 11% increase in the demand for mental health services and that 42% of children and adolescents have been waiting in excess of 6 months for access to these services.



At the same time there are wide ranges of positive psychology tools available which have a significant and increasing amount of empirical evidence that supports their effectiveness in enhancing well-being and reducing anxiety and depression.⁵ Often children have to wait until adulthood before being introduced to interventions that could potentially enhance their lives in a number of ways.

School is an appropriate setting for children to grow and become empowered instead of focusing on stresses and challenges. Teachers are ideally placed to teach these interventions to children and to enable them to reap the benefits at the earliest possible stage.

It must be added that enhancing children's well-being can also lead to a range of other benefits including increased academic performance. For example, cultivating positive emotions can improve performance by enhancing attention and creativity.⁶ Other research has shown that happy people are more creative, can multi-task better, are more tolerant of boring tasks and are more helpful and sociable.⁷

Anxiety in Children

Anxiety is a common and growing issue for children. Many of the **Tools of Resilience** provide practical strategies for children to help them deal with their anxiety. For example, Lesson 3: The **Lucky Dip of Distraction**, encourages children to identify problems or worries over which they have no control. They can then use healthy distraction to prevent rumination and the development of negative thought patterns. If their worry or problem is within their control, they can be encouraged to use the **Planning Pen** tool (Lesson 4) to take the first step in dealing with it. Learning to differentiate between problem-solving thinking patterns and ruminative thinking patterns can be a very helpful strategy in dealing with anxiety. Other particularly relevant tools for helping children with anxiety are the **Helpful Thinking Helmet** (Lesson 5), which encourages children to challenge their negative or anxious thoughts, and the **Mindfulness Switch** (Lessons 7/8/9), which helps them to adopt a gentle and accepting approach to thoughts and feelings.





Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



The Importance of a Whole School Culture of Well-Being

Research shows that in addition to teaching children the specific skills of well-being, having a whole school culture of well-being optimises the benefits to the whole school community.⁸ Such a culture includes the following characteristics:

- the presence of strong positive relationships⁹
- a sense of belonging and shared identity¹⁰
- appreciation and valuing of academic and non-academic achievements¹¹
- a participative approach to the management of the school in which the student voice is heard¹¹
- clear rules and high expectations conveyed to students¹¹
- students' needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness being met¹²

This programme is specifically designed to support a whole school approach by providing a spiral curriculum of well-being which can be delivered within Primary Schools.

Aims of the Programme

The aim of **Weaving Well-Being** is to allow children to learn about and practise the specific behaviours and activities which have been linked to Well-Being, in a child-centred, interesting and age-appropriate way. The children are encouraged to practise the skills, strategies and activities, to see how they feel and how useful they find them. Children will have individual preferences for specific activities. It is helpful to expose them to a wide variety so that they can find a range of strategies which best suit their particular personality. Weaving Well-being provides a concrete and practical method to incorporate positive mental health strategies into the classroom.

In this way, children learn how to become creators of their own well-being - over the course of the programme they learn how to weave all of the elements of well-being into their everyday life. They continually reflect on how the interventions make them feel.





Part 1

Introduction to Weaving Well-Being



Teacher Well-Being

It is recognised that teachers face a wide range of challenges in their own lives and that teaching is, in itself a very demanding role. Any initiatives that can help teachers deal more effectively with these challenges would be extremely beneficial. Introducing well-being lessons into schools is an excellent opportunity to enhance teacher well-being at the same time.

Many of the activities included in each year of the **Weaving Well-Being** programme have been researched in the adult population as well and have been shown to provide a wide range of benefits. These can often be implemented in the same way as used by the children or may need slight adaptation to make them more relevant to teachers or other adults.

For example, in lesson 3, children learn how to use healthy distraction to avoid the negative impacts of rumination. Each child will identify the distraction techniques and activities that work best for them. However, rumination is also a considerable challenge for adults and healthy distraction is an excellent tool to prevent teachers from rumination as well.

Therefore, it is strongly advised that, as teachers roll out this programme, they look for opportunities to complete and benefit from the activities they feel are most relevant to them. During each lesson teachers should have two roles:

1. As a teacher introducing children to each concept and encouraging them to complete the various activities and homework to help them obtain the maximum benefits from each lesson.
2. As a learner, looking to see what they can learn from each lesson and how they can personally implement each tool.

Teacher well-being is also enhanced by the presence of a whole-school culture of well-being (see section on “Whole School Culture”).

