

Perpetuate the Positive: Lifting the Glass Ceiling on Wellbeing

Introduction: Lifting the Glass Ceiling on Wellbeing

At the Valor Institute, we believe it's time to shift our collective lens—from problem-solving to possibility-building. For too long, the fields of health, psychology, and community development have focused on identifying what's wrong and how to fix it. That work is essential—but it's not the whole story. We can diagnose stress and depression, measure anxiety and disease, and write entire strategic plans about what isn't working. But what about what's right? What helps people flourish, connect, and feel alive? What helps communities thrive—not just survive?

The Paradigm Shift: Beyond Neutral

Our society often defines wellbeing as the absence of illness—a mindset that creates a kind of glass ceiling on health and happiness. We aim for 'not sick,' but rarely for 'fully well.' Valor reframes the question: not 'What's broken?' but 'What helps people come fully alive?' This means treating vitality, vibrance, and flourishing as measurable goals worth investing in—every bit as seriously as we fund disease prevention or crisis response.

Scientific Foundations

The 'Perpetuate the Positive' model is rooted in decades of research in positive health, social wellbeing, and preventive science:

- **Positive Health:** Studies show that health outcomes improve when we focus on strengths and positive emotions.
- **Social Determinants of Flourishing:** Research led by scholars such as Tyler VanderWeele demonstrates that meaning, virtue, and belonging predict longevity as strongly as income or education.
- **Preventive Science:** Early interventions and lifestyle practices not only prevent disease but also promote higher-order wellbeing.

The Three Pillars of Positive Wellbeing

Vitality (Mind–Body)

Vitality is the energy and resilience that animate our daily lives. It's the measure of how alive we feel—expressed through movement, strength, rest, and renewal. While traditional health models focus on fitness and stress reduction, Valor focuses on energy, restoration, and joy in motion.

Vitality drives the Lifestyle Wellbeing programs, which translate evidence-based preventive practices into everyday habits that sustain life and optimism.

Flourishing (Community–Organizational)

Flourishing is the social process through which individuals and communities co-create wellbeing. It's about belonging, fairness, and mutual support. Valor applies this principle across Community Resilience programs, which build strong networks that perpetuate collective wellbeing, and Healing Spaces initiatives that design environments that support flourishing.

Vibrance (Spirit–Purpose)

Vibrance is the spiritual and psychological brightness that arises from purpose, awe, and joy. It's the felt sense of aliveness that emerges when we live with meaning. At Valor, Vibrance is expressed through initiatives like the 'Vibrance: A Year of Flourishing' course—a twelve-month journey in self-illumination, presence, and renewal. The course explores themes such as belonging, gratitude, purpose, stillness, and legacy, guiding participants toward deeper alignment and personal expression.

Integration: The Framework for Perpetuating the Positive

By investing in vitality, vibrance, and flourishing, we multiply wellbeing. Each pillar reinforces the others, creating systems that not only solve problems but sustain the conditions for growth.

- Mind–Body → Vitality: Energy, restoration, and joy in motion.
- Spirit–Purpose → Vibrance: Meaning, awe, gratitude, and growth.
- Community–Organizational → Flourishing: Belonging, fairness, and mutual support.

Conclusion: Beyond Neutral

Problem-solving is necessary, but it should never be the horizon line of our imagination. The future of health and community lies in reaching beyond neutral—building systems that help people and places thrive. By perpetuating the positive—vitality, vibrance, and flourishing—we lift the ceiling on what's possible for human life.

References

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