

Art Museums and Well-Being

A Review of Literature



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Cover image: Illustration of 5 evidence-based actions which promote well-being National Economics Foundation (nef)

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Abstract

The purpose of this review is to deepen understanding of the meaning of the often amorphous concept “well-being”; learn about what is associated with fostering well-being; and use research-based findings to articulate the ways an art museum’s presence and activities increase opportunities for personal and societal well-being.

First the concept of well-being and the closely related concept of happiness, mindfulness, savoring and creativity are defined. It is suggested that these concepts be thought of systemically since changes in one of the concept results in changes in the others. For example, mindfulness and savoring involve similar mind sets which include feelings of openness and non-defensiveness, characteristics related to well-being.

The literature reveals a strong conviction among researchers, museums professionals and the general public that art and art museums contribute positively to personal and societal well-being. The art museum is inclusive, supportive, stimulating, non-judgmental, enjoyable and encourages focused attention—all characteristics of environments that promote well-being. Some national surveys indicate that attendance at cinema, concerts, museums or art exhibitions is positively related to longevity with those who attend more often living longer.

Existing museum exhibitions and programs designed to enhance well-being suggests three categories: 1) use of objects to increase self-understanding and promote health); 2) programs and materials that support well-being across the life span; and 3) experiences with meditation and mindful transcendence that heighten self-awareness.

Outcomes of museum experiences related to well-being have been little researched. However a rigorously designed examination of a field trip program at an art museum as well as a longitudinal study of the effects of participating in an intensive teen program at contemporary art museums show increases in historical empathy, confidence with expressions, acceptance of differences, and civic engagement – all indicators of well-being. It is suggested that there is still a great need for research into the role of art and art museums for enhancing well-being. A number of important research questions and well-established research instruments for looking at well-being and related concepts are included for consideration.

Introduction

*“Under their learning, inclusion, access, outreach and audience development programmes, museums are already having an affect on well-being and, indeed, have had throughout much of their history. **The challenge, as with learning, is measuring the idiosyncratic but potentially significant contribution museums make to individual and community well-being, and articulately advocating for further work to potential partners and funders.**”* Emphasis added

Ander, et.al. 2011, 237

Visitors and patrons often remark that they “just love” coming to the museum. They tell and retell the ways being at the museum makes them feel good – and they associate the museum with happiness, a sense of connectedness, being challenged and learning new things – all things that lead to overall well-being. In a recent review of research literature about perceptions about the contributions of museums, Scott, Dodd and Sandell (2014) found that people value museums and galleries because they provide: 1) a manifestation of the intrinsic value of arts and culture; 2) opportunities for active engagement through interaction with the art; 3) improved well-being (e.g. calming, uplifting, pleasurable); and 4) connections - with others, the past, other cultures, place, the universal.

Silverman (2010) notes that museums contribute to fulfillment of four major human needs: health; competence; identity and transcendence. She introduces a broad perspective on “health” and notes that museums contribute to health by: promoting relaxation, fostering health education, addressing social conditions and disseminating public health policy.

Many museums in the United States are giving attention to how they can contribute to people’s health and well-being as they bring collections and activities to hospitals and other health care facilities. Museums are places where people get to practice and hone skills that enhance their well-being: looking closely; slowing down; being surrounded by beauty; thinking about the human condition and creativity.

The concept of well-being is broader than it is usually interpreted within the museum field. Today, well-being falls within the realm of positive psychology, a branch of psychology that focuses on “the study and practice of positive emotions, strengths, and virtues that make individuals and institutions thrive” (International Positive Psychology Association, 2014). Positive psychology is an outgrowth of humanistic psychology, a movement that began in the 1950s when some psychologists noted that the field of psychology was focused overwhelmingly on human problems and deficiencies and generally neglected the study of highly functioning people (Association for Humanistic Psychology, 2014). The relationship between health and well-being is clearly stated by the World Health Organization (WHO): Health is a state of complete

physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1946). As society's standards for well-being continue to evolve, people like Salom (2008) point out that many museums provide an experience that invites visitors into a slowed pace, subdued sounds, and an orderly visual experience. He suggests that directly encountering a piece of art and then moving on to the next involves the kind of letting go that is characteristic of meditation. In the museum experience the visitor can relax into the present and enhance her well-being.

This review of literature was guided by two questions:

- How can art museums contribute to the well-being of individuals and the larger community?
- What can we learn that will move us beyond a vague understanding of the concept of well-being.

Thus, the focus of this review is to deepen understanding of the meaning of well-being; learn about what is associated with fostering well-being; and get research-based ideas about how to deliberately articulate the ways an art museum's presence and activities increase opportunities for well-being?

DAM commissioned this literature review:

- To provide a statement about what is known about arts-related experiences in museums as they influence health and well-being; and
- To provide examples of innovative and successful museum-based arts programming intended to enhance health and well-being.

Parameters of the Review

The focus of the literature review is on peer-reviewed journals from 2000-present as well as some older classics and particularly compelling individual studies in the field of museums, health and well-being. Books that report research and theories based on research were also reviewed. The content focus of the review is:

- Definitions of Well-being and Related Concepts
- Measures of Well-being and Related Concepts
- The relationship of health and well-being
- The impact of encounters with art museums and their collections on health and well-being (including informal visits, programs and activities—solo, as part of a group, or with friends or family members)

The review began with a search for evidence-based research and practice on the links between art museum experiences and well-being, with a specific emphasis on young people, 18 years and younger, and their experiences in museums as (1) participants in youth programs; (2) part of school group visits; and (3) members of family groups. To gain a fuller understanding of the topics under investigation, the search was expanded to include research about adult populations.

Structure of the Review

This review begins with an examination of the concept of well-being and related concepts such as happiness, mindfulness, savoring, and creativity. Next the relationship of well-being to engaging with art and art museum activities and experiences is discussed. Examples of art museum programs and exhibits aimed at improving participant well-being are summarized. Finally, opportunities for research and measurement options are offered.

What is Well-Being?

There are two major types of well-being, personal and societal/community. In this review, both types of well-being are acknowledged, but the emphasis is on personal well-being. In this section, currently accepted definitions of both types of well-being are reviewed. Other concepts, closely related to well-being - happiness, mindfulness, savoring, creativity - are examined and characteristics of environments that foster well-being are highlighted.

Personal Well-Being

Well-being is broadly defined by the New Economics Foundation (nef) as “feeling good and functioning well” (Corrina, et. al., 2008). More specifically, the indicators of well-being are seen in a person who is alert, aware, energetic, happy, a life-long learner in good relationships with others, and contributes positively to the life of the community.

As shown with the illustration on the cover of this report, nef researchers (Aked, et. al., 2008) advise five ways to enhance personal well-being: **Connect**—with people; **Be Active**—physically, even just walking; **Take Notice**—be mindful, aware, reflect on experiences; **Keep Learning**—learn new things, revive old interests; and **Give**—be nice, thank someone, volunteer. NEF intentionally suggests activities that can be engaged in by a person regardless of life situations such as age, health, gender, income or type of community. This view of personal well-being is grounded in a belief that attention to well-being is a universal, human activity and right. Regardless of specific conditions, a person who has opportunities to engage in the five activities nef describes are more likely to have a sense of well-being – of feeling good and functioning well.

Other characteristics of personal well-being include positive functioning, engagement with life, positive social relationships, feelings of competence, confidence and autonomy, vitality and inner resources that lead to resilient coping when problems arise. There are everyday skills and ways of engaging with the world (mindfulness; acceptance of multiple perspectives; inquiry) as well as specialized practices like meditation that are within the realm of ways museums can contribute to personal well-being. People with a sense of well-being also report being satisfied with life and feeling that life has meaning (Anders et.al. 2010; Seligman, 2011).

Societal/Community Well-Being

Gallup-Healthways, Inc. (2015) researchers went beyond personal well-being to identify elements of societies that are associated with well-being. Two factors included in the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index that are not part of the elements of personal well-being are: Financial well-being (managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security); and community well-being (at the individual level, this is defined as liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community).

Well-being at the community level involves: community cohesion; civic engagement, local participation, safe spaces and environmental sustainability (Ander, et.al. 2011). These elements of community life cannot be readily created by the individual alone, but must be co-created in consort with one's neighbors, civic officials, public institutions and local government. So, the existence of the museum – and the presence of it in the lives of all citizens – can contribute to community well-being.

In summary, people living lives with a high degree of well-being are: vital and active; connected with people; highly aware and reflective life-long learners; contributors to their communities; resiliently able to cope with adversity; emotionally well-adjusted and generally feel autonomous, competent and satisfied with their lives. They manage their economic life to reduce stress and increase security. They like where they live and take pride in their communities to which they make positive contributions.

Well-being is a complex concept, and research demonstrates that to more fully understand it, one needs to examine several other concepts -- happiness, mindfulness, savoring, and creativity. The next section of this review discusses these four concepts related to well-being.

Concepts Related to Well-Being

Happiness. Happier people have greater feelings of well-being, and those who report greater feelings of well-being report being happy (Lyubomirsky, 2007). Research has identified innumerable activities that promote happiness. Among them are some that relate directly to arts and cultural experiences. Social relationships, for example, increase happiness and are strengthened during time spent with friends and family in museum and arts activity settings.

Viewing and making art contributes to happiness. The main thesis of Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) most popular book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, is that happiness is not a fixed state but can be developed as we learn to achieve flow in our lives. When experiencing or making art one can frequently drift into a flow experience. He defines flow as "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 3). Optimal experience (happiness), he concludes, is thus something we make happen.

The cognitive and social skills related to art-making also relate to feelings of well-being and happiness. Studio Thinking is a framework designed by practitioners at Project Zero, the research arm of Harvard's School of Education. Out of this framework comes the Studio Habits of Mind (Hetland, et. al., 2007), a set of eight dispositions that an artist uses and which suggest aspects of art museum programming that could be emphasized in an effort to maximize a person's feelings of well-being.

- **Develop Craft:** Learning to use tools, materials, artistic conventions; and learning to care for tools, materials, and space.
- **Engage & Persist:** Learning to embrace problems of relevance within the art world and/or of personal importance, to develop focus conducive to working and persevering at tasks.
- **Envision:** Learning to picture mentally what cannot be directly observed, and imagine possible next steps in making a piece.
- **Express:** Learning to create works that convey an idea, a feeling, or a personal meaning.
- **Observe:** Learning to attend to visual contexts more closely than ordinary “looking” requires, and thereby to see things that otherwise might not be seen.
- **Reflect:** Learning to think and talk with others about an aspect of one’s work or working process, and learning to judge one’s own work and working process and the work of others.
- **Stretch & Explore:** Learning to reach beyond one’s capacities, to explore playfully without a preconceived plan, and to embrace the opportunity to learn from mistakes.
- **Understand Community:** Learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e., in classrooms, in local arts organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society.

As people of all ages get to practice the above skills and develop associated habits, it is reflected in their sense of well-being. Several of the Studio Habits of Mind are a reminder that the benefits of engagement with art extends beyond knowledge and enjoyment of the art itself. Things like reflection, persistence and reaching beyond one’s capabilities are what researchers call superordinate variables. The trait is there no matter what else you are doing. Mindfulness is another superordinate variable that is called forward in art museums and is highly correlated with well-being. Regardless of what you are doing (walking down the street, writing a report, playing baseball), you can be doing it mindfully or mindlessly.

Mindfulness. To be mindful is to be open to new information and new points of view. It is going off auto-pilot and paying attention to what is going on around you. In a recent interview with the staff of the Harvard Business Review (2015), Ellen Langer (1989), who has been studying mindfulness for four decades, traced her interest in the topic to her experience as an artist. She recounts making a mark on a canvas with yellow paint and immediately recognizing that she’s made a mistake; she meant to use magenta. But then she stopped herself, decided to look (be mindful) of what the yellow contributed to the piece, and she moved on.

Today, there is a veritable explosion of interest in mindfulness and its benefits. Mindfulness instruction is part of the curriculum in several urban school districts, Boyce (2011) has compiled a layperson’s review of the origins of mindfulness in the meditation practices of Buddhism to its introduction to the United States general public with the publication of the first edition of Jon Kabat-Zinn’s book, *Wherever you go there you are*, in 1994. Kabat-Zinn (2005) views mindfulness as a secular discipline, and in recent

years Langer's continued research program and discoveries in neuroscience show the beneficial effects of mindfulness – and the practice of meditation – for decreasing stress, increasing co-operation and caring, increasing creativity, and boosting performance in all areas of life (Boyce, 2011; Staff, HBR, 2015).

Art museums have many of the features of environments that are known to encourage mindfulness. They are non-judgmental, positive, and supportive. They impose minimal preconceptions and are open to multiple points of view. Questioning, rather than absolutism is the order of the day. They encourage free choice, cognitive flexibility, and the altering of perspectives. As Robin Carol of the Rubin Museum in New York City writes, “[t]he practices of meditation and art have long gone hand in hand, and art itself is often described as a meditative experience” (Whitaker, 2015). It provides the mental space for insight to arise and be recognized as such. Viewing art, like meditation, gives us the opportunity to focus less on ourselves and more on the expressions of the artist. It encourages us to let go of the relentless self-referencing, self-dialoging, self-consciousness, self-criticism, and so on, for at least a few moments, in favor of being relaxed, present, tuned-in, and responsive. Closely related to heightened attention and engagement is the experience of savoring.

Savoring is the capacity to attend to, appreciate, and enhance the positive experiences of one's life (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). Savoring is significantly related to general happiness and hence, to well-being. Like mindfulness, savoring calls for “stepping back” from the experience and noting the thoughts and feelings associated with it. A person who is savoring an art experience in a gallery, for instance, is conscious of how awe-struck she is by the exhibition, notices the brush strokes, and wonders about how the glaze was achieved.

Connoisseurs are quintessential savorers. A challenge for museums is that many visitors do not consider themselves connoisseurs and savoring is less likely to occur in environments when differences in knowledge and skill are salient. Art museums, like DAM, have been hugely successful in creating situations and interpretive materials that increase focused attention and sensory involvement, and thus encourage savoring. The savoring that one does when experiencing art is happiness-inducing. Other benefits of savoring include development of intrinsic interest, motivation to learn more, and heightened creativity.

Creativity. As noted in the DAM's literature review on creativity and art museums (Munley & Rossiter, 2013a) definitions of creativity abound. Fortunately among those who systematically study creativity, there is some consensus on what creativity is and is not. For them, creativity is generally defined as a process or ability that generates ideas or products that are original, novel, or surprising and adaptive, functional or workable (Simonton, 2000).

In her review of existing studies on everyday creativity, Richards (2007) summarizes the many benefits of living more creatively, including becoming aware of

present experience, creatively coping with adversity, awareness of our interconnection and unity with others, working with others toward broader goals, bridging false dichotomies, and welcoming the risks of exploring the unknown and embracing the mysteries of life. Richards makes a direct link between being creative and well-being: “A creative style of living”, coping with difficulties and weaving possibilities”, she concludes, “can not only produce useful accomplishments for self and world but can offer the creator new resilience, perspective, aliveness in the moment, joy, and purpose in life.”

A review of research in England linked opportunities for creative endeavors with overall well-being among students. Students who participated in creativity programs grew in confidence. They began to think better of themselves, recognized their own potential to improve, and were able to work more effectively both individually and socially – all outcomes highly related to well-being (McLellan, et. al., 2012).

Summary

Well-being is a complex concept, and research demonstrates that to more fully understand it, one needs to examine several other related concepts -- happiness, mindfulness, savoring, and creativity. These human characteristics not only bear a strong positive relationship to each other; they also correlate with physical, mental, spiritual and societal health.

Researchers and practitioners alike recommend a systems perspective to understanding well-being -- meaning that changes in any one of the concepts will bring about changes in the others. For example, the happiness experienced from a flow experience may induce a person to be more relaxed and thereby become more mindful or better able to play with ideas in order to create something original. Practicing the skills of attending to details and savoring the choice of materials and forms of expression employed by an artist might open the mind to appreciating different world views.

Increasingly, attention to well-being is seen as important to quality of life, and is of interest to everyone – not just those who need to adapt to a physical or mental condition or who are sick and need to get better. Well-being is an aspiration for all. This section discussed some of the key concepts associated with a systems view of well-being – the elements of a high-quality life. Life experiences vary across the life span, and so to do some of the concrete indicators of subjective well-being. The next short section provides a reminder of the elements of a good life at different life stages.

Well-Being Across the Life Cycle

The DAM staff expressed special interest in how art museums are related to the well-being of children and teens. It is widely agreed that the family provides for security and basic needs as well as structure and care to encourage physical development and health, emotional development and well-being, social development, cognitive development, moral and spiritual development and cultural and aesthetic development (Fiese, et. al., 2007). Thus one answer to the question of museums and children's well-being is to acknowledge that when museums provide services for families they are, in essence, providing opportunities for children's healthy development.

Holistic views of healthy child development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007) include the importance of the family and argue that the family (and child) needs the additional support of extended family, friends, community services and social institutions such as schools, parks, churches and museums in order to have the prospect of the healthiest life possible. Brain development, research tells us, is based on a broad range of experiences from a very early age. Even very young children are drawn to aesthetic experiences, and adults can help young children by introducing visually interesting things into the environment and by helping the child notice things by pointing out aesthetic aspects of art works and other environments, even when the child is pre-verbal (Danko-McGhee & Schaffer, n.d.).

In addition to realizing the importance of aesthetic experiences from an early age, and the support museums can provide for children's development through its family programs, attention to the particular needs for healthy development at different life stages could be informative for making decisions about exhibition and program design.

Babies, Younger Children & Families

Well-being for young children means they are confident, happy and healthy. England's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2009) has developed an early childhood curriculum framework that outlines what children need for their well-being as babies, toddlers and young children. They also offer ideas about what adults need to do to facilitate development. These ideas suggest things that can be built into the museum environment as well as into museum programs for younger visitors.

Babies

- Encourage in a consistent, calm and respectful manner
- Provide opportunities for multi-sensory experiences
- Encourage them to do things for themselves
- Nurture a sense of wonder
- Provide both repetition and challenge for both mastery and risk-taking

Help them respect themselves and others

Toddlers

Toddlers and preschoolers find pleasure in art and are drawn to it. Parents who do art activities with their children on a regular basis report that the following skills are developed by the activities: communication; problem-solving; social emotional development; fine motor development; and self-expression/creativity (Kohl, 2015). Other benefits of engaging with the arts are: development of studio thinking (Hetland, et. al., 2007), a part of which is engagement and persistence; empathy; and respect for different perspectives and judgments.

- Provide structured, orderly environment and predictable but flexible routine
- Enable them to be independent—encourage them to do things for themselves
- Encourage them to solve problems and think flexibly
- Provide opportunities for strengthening, refining physical skills, increasing eye-hand coordination
- Encourage them to experience and care for the environment
- Teach them to act on curiosity, take risks, concentrate and be resilient

Children

Children, ages 8 – 14, report that their well-being depends on loving and caring relationships; feeling calm and not stressful; having opportunities to do activities that they like; and good experiences with formal and informal learning activities (The Children’s Society, 2015). Advice for providing the best experiences for children of these ages includes:

- Help them predict and cope with changes, transitions and stressful life events
- Approach conflict situations calmly
- Model positive behavior; create opportunities to share and take turns
- Encourage making healthy choices
- Listen to and discuss things in depth with the young child
- Plan quiet times; set up space for thinking and reflecting
- Explore citizenship and social justice with children and respect them as citizens
- Appreciate children’s efforts
- Identify their individual strengths and abilities
- Help them cope and try again when they experience failure

Museum staff who act with these ideas in mind and programs that incorporate them will contribute to the well-being of young children.

Teens

Identity formation is one of the primary tasks of the adolescent years (Dubnick, 2003). By providing access to resources, involvement in real world problem solving and action, and connections to new social and cultural networks, arts and cultural institutions can make important contributions to identity development.

Successful museum teen programs extend over time and produce benefits related to well-being such as confidence, feelings of empowerment and increased self-worth, improved problem solving and creativity skills, friendship development and leadership skills (Whitney Museum of American Art, in press). These accomplishments are in line with the emerging Creative Youth Development movement (Liu, 2014), a collaboration of youth development professionals devoted to promoting community involvement and positive self-image using arts “to combine personal development and deep engagement and skill building in the arts” (Montgomery, 2014, 1).

However, teens are often not comfortable in adult institutions such as museums, so it is important that the art museum is obviously welcoming, explicitly inviting teens to participate. .

Older Adults

In a recent review of literature regarding the museum’s relationship with older adults, it was noted that some intrinsic benefits of the arts are particularly significant for older adults (Munley & Rossiter, 2013b). Among these benefits are the following, all of which are related to positive well-being.

Captivation—New ways of seeing the world are opened and the capacity to “perceive, feel and interpret the world of every day experience.” (McCarthy, et.al., 2004, p.47)

Pleasure—The arts provide a deeply satisfying imaginative experience. Pleasure along with captivation are the two major immediate and directs effects of art experiences.

Expanded Capacity for Empathy—By encountering varied individual viewpoints and modes of expression, all of which are not pleasing, older adults experience an increased tolerance for alternative perspectives and world views.

Cognitive Growth--This comes about through the experience of finding meaning.

Summary

Well-being takes on different meanings at different stages of life. Museums have long been aware of the importance of infusing program and exhibition design with knowledge about stages of human development and associated social, emotional and cognitive capabilities and needs. That same developmental approach applies to efforts focused on health and well-being.

Museums and Well-Being

Most of the studies about the degree to which museums and arts participation contribute to individual and societal well-being have been conducted in Europe. There is more of a norm there of including questions about museums in large-scale public surveys, and there is greater progress toward identifying indicators of well-being that can be used across the museum field. In this section, results of the large-scale public value studies are summarized. Though there is no comparable data available for the United States, many scholars and practitioners have written about the obvious similarities between qualities of museum spaces and experiences and environments and experiences that correlate with well-being. This section ends with a summary of frameworks that link museums to outcomes associated with well-being

Museums as Social Environments that Foster Well-Being

Research into well-being and the other concepts discussed here indicates that they are enhanced by environments that are inclusive, supportive, stimulating, non-judgmental, enjoyable, and encourage focused attention. These environments also encourage questioning and relationships with others, and allow for personal choice that encourages feelings of autonomy and competence. All of the elements of well-being can be enhanced with concerted effort. Clearly, the art museum can be an ideal environment for enhancing well-being.

The World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard & Sach, 2015) looked at societal-national well-being and found that, in the whole of a society, there is a relationship among honesty, benevolence, cooperation, trustworthiness and feelings of well-being. Cumulatively these form the basis of social well-being. Organizations that are imbued with these characteristics constituted a positive-well-being environment that supports positive individual well-being.

Environments that support personal well-being have the following characteristics: supportive, non-evaluative, low pressure; facilitate connections; encourage focused attention; stimulating, encourage learning (affective as well as cognitive); pleasurable; provide opportunities to give back; encourage healthy behavior. Note the similarities between these features and environments that foster creativity.

Arts Participation: Health & Well-Being

Major surveys in Sweden and Norway provide hard data on the positive effects of cultural activities on longevity and health. Bygren (1996) surveyed a random sample of the adult Swedish population about their cultural activities in 1982-83 and also conducted follow up interviews with respect to survival after December 31, 1991. The outcome measure was survival after controlling for eight possible confounding variables: age, sex, education level, income, long term disease, social network, smoking and

physical exercise. Results indicated people attending cultural events often had a better chance of survival than those who attend rarely.

Konlaan et. al. (2000) further analyzed interviews from the Swedish living conditions survey. The cohort was followed with respect to survival for fourteen years up to December 31, 1996. This analysis indicated that attendance at certain kinds of cultural events may have beneficial effects on longevity. There was higher mortality risk for those who rarely visit cinema, concerts, museums or art exhibitions compared with those visiting them most often. There were no significant mortality effects for attending theater, church service or sports events or any effect of reading or music making.

More recently Cuypers et.al. (2012) surveyed responses of 50,797 adults in Nord-Trondelag County, Norway and found support for the positive effects of cultural activities on health promotion and health care, though the effects were less for men than for women.

Matarasso (1997) used questionnaires, interviews, discussion groups, and participant observation with 513 participants in 60 participatory arts programs including museum outreach programs. Chatterjee & Noble (2013) summarized respondents reports of benefits of project participation that are related to personal well-being: 84% increased confidence; 80% learned new skills; 91% made new friends; 86% were motivated to participate in further projects; 86% tried new things; 49% changed their ideas; 52% felt better and healthier; 73% were happier since being involved. Similar findings were reported from the Open Museum project in Leicestershire, where they also found that close examination of artifacts and art works and opportunities to be creative were appreciated in the context of mental health services (Clayton & Utting, 2011). The Open Museum study participants commented on the enjoyment of community activity and as well as focusing on something other than illness and deficits.

Inspired by the New Economic Foundation (nef) five ways of well-being, the Museum of East Anglian Life in Great Britain redefined the purpose of the museum to that of a social enterprise because its leaders felt “its strength lay not in its collection or historic buildings but in the social networks built between visitors, volunteers and people who work there” (Thompson, et. al. 2011a, 2).

Believing that new directions were important not only for their own museum, but for the future health of all museums, Tony Butler, asked nef staff to write a paper outlining how museums might use artistic and cultural heritage to influence people to lead meaningful and happy lives. The resulting paper presented the proposition that “museums are well placed to play an active part [in contributing to personal and social well-being], but that grasping the opportunity will require reimagining some key aspects of the role, both in terms of kinds of experience they provide to their visitors and the way they relate to their collections, to their communities, and to the pressing issues of the day” (Thompson, et. al., 2011a, 3).

Two years later (Chatterjee & Noble, 2013) concurred that a wide range of evidence suggests that regular engagement in active, socially engaging activities such as visiting museums and being involved in museum activities has positive effects on health and well-being. However, it needs to be acknowledged, they pointed out, that the “evidence” is generally not based on rigorously designed research and is focused on programs and activities aimed at targeted audience such as the elderly, isolated, hard to reach, and mental health users, rather than the general public. Earlier, Stuckey and Noble (2010) reviewed peer-reviewed research on arts and healing 1995-2007 and reached the same conclusion regarding methodological limitations. They concluded (though hard data is not available to support the assertion), “it is likely that creative engagement contributes to many aspects of physiological and psychological conditions typically associated with improved health status.”

Museums as Places that Support Societal Well-being

The World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard & Sach, 2015) looked at societal-national well-being and found that, in the whole of a society, there is a relationship among honesty, benevolence, cooperation, trustworthiness and feelings of well-being. Organizations that are imbued with these characteristics constituted a positive-well-being environment that supports positive individual well-being.

Furthermore, environments that support personal well-being have the following characteristics. They are supportive, non-evaluative, low pressure; and facilitate making connections. Environments contributing to well-being also encourage focused attention; they are stimulating, encourage learning (affective as well as cognitive); and people experience them as pleasurable. Few would disagree that the features of environments that support personal and societal well-being are markedly similar to the ways people describe the features of museum experiences.

Frameworks Linking Museums and Well-Being

That said, Chatterjee and Noble’s review of literature about descriptions of the relationship between museums and health and well-being, identified the following themes regarding the impact of cultural encounters with museums and their collections.

- provide a positive social experience;
- provide opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills;
- are calming and reduce anxiety;
- encourage positive feelings such as optimism, hope and enjoyment;
- promote self-esteem and a sense of identity and community;
- provide new experiences which may be novel, inspirational and meaningful;
- reduce feelings of isolation;

- give the feeling that identity, ideas, and opinions are valued leading to increased energy, alertness, focus and purpose (Chatterjee & Noble, 2013, p.49).

Ander et.al. (2011, 248-252), based on a similar analysis of descriptions of museum experiences and aspects of well-being, developed a framework of well-being outcomes and described the kinds of museum activities that could potentially contribute to each type of outcome.

Dimension of Well-being	Outcome/Impact	What museums offer
Personal well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfying life • Vitality • Meaning & Purpose • Positive feelings 	<p>Museum exhibitions, programs, collections and events provide people with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New learning & skills • Relaxing/contemplative environments • Opportunities to volunteer • Offers to think for oneself • Encouragement to be creative • Experiences involving empathy, tolerance, happiness, kindness, and laughter • Calming environments and experiences that can distract from or combat negative feelings and conditions. • Opportunities to explore emotions and emotional intelligence • Safe, friendly environment for personal reflection and explorations
Social and cultural well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Belonging • Supportive relationships • Understand place in world • Knowledge of items of cultural importance 	<p>Museum exhibitions, programs, collections and events provide people with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to meet/work with people from your own and other communities • Opportunities to meet/work with people of different ages • Information about their own and other cultures and times • Ways to strengthen their family bonds • Reminders of intrinsic and collective worth
Physical and sensory well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build strength • Reduction of anxiety • Provide universal accessibility • Inclusion of those with illnesses in larger society 	<p>Museum exhibitions, programs, collections and events provide people with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of multi-sensory and tactile senses • Exercise – getting to and around the museum • Stimulation that supports rehabilitation, treatment and recovery • Accessible environments and aides

Summary

Although there is very little hard evidence, there is a strong conviction among researchers, museum professionals and the general public that art and art museums contribute positively to personal well-being. Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that the environment in the art museum includes characteristics of environments that promote well-being and some national surveys have revealed that attendance at cinema, concerts, museums or art exhibitions bears a positive relationship to longevity with those who attend more often living longer. The natural curiosity and desire to learn among even the youngest children, and adolescents' developmental task of identity formation suggest that there is a major role for museums to play in their lives. Parents who want what's best for their children often include museum visits as part of family life. Clearly the youth and family audience is ready made to take advantage of what the art museum has to offer for the enhancement of their lives and personal well-being. In the next section we review existing museum programs designed to enhance well-being and consider ways in which informal museum experiences can enhance well-being.

Museum Programs that Enhance Well-Being

In this section we highlight a variety of museum programs that address various aspects of well-being. This review of literature and practice revealed that the most frequently offered well-being/health programs by art museums target older adults with health issues, such as dementia and Alzheimer's. They also provide carefully designed social experiences for those coping with conditions like autism or who for other reasons have limited opportunities to be in public places.

As noted earlier, hard data on the success of these programs is generally not available. However, their existence is evidence that the museum community is beginning to direct its resources toward the goal of enhancing well-being. Here are some programs that address well-being issues and stand out for their focus and/or target audience.

Use of Objects to Increase Self-Understanding and Promote Health.

Health-related exhibits and programs. Dodd & Jones (2014) helped create a year-long outreach program in five different museums in England's East Midlands region with direct consideration of the 5 nef elements of well-being. Specifically, the project objectives were: to offer learning opportunities and activities that encourage people to connect with people and ideas (CONNECT & LEARN); to provide new experiences through encounters with objects through enjoyable social activities (TAKE NOTICE); and provide opportunities for people to give, take ownership and achieve (GIVE).

Three exhibit/programs were developed: 1) an anti-tobacco program using old advertisements for tobacco taken to schools and youth groups had a positive effect on youth attitudes about not smoking; 2) objects from the collection taken to older adults in care homes for purposes of not only enhancing reminiscences but also stimulating thinking about current life and future possibilities resulted in positive changes in positive emotions (happy, enthusiastic, active, inspired, excited, feeling alert); 3) objects taken to children in a hospital school, handled by the children and discussed in terms of body, mind and spirit was deemed successful based on observations.

While the focus was on well-being, objects from the museum collections were at the core of the programs. They believed the age and authenticity of the objects was important for connecting to the past. Objects were also intended to promote positive feelings and feelings of being part of a wider context, and to help people understand their place in the world (Dodd & Jones, 2014, 26).

Art workshops designed to enhance mental health. Four museums in North Wales offered workshops in their galleries for people at risk or recovering from mental distress with the goal of promoting well-being (Neal, 2012a, 2012b). Eight groups of 5-

10 participants experienced workshops lasting up to 10 weeks. Use pre- and post-tests, participants showed significant increases ($p < .001$) in self-reported well-being on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale. In interviews, participants reported that doing art activities in the gallery setting was quite important. They talked about the privilege of being able to enjoy such beautiful surroundings in both the galleries and surrounding grounds. This was especially important as some live in very austere spaces so the pleasure of serene and beautiful surroundings was very therapeutic.

The Hammer Museum's artist in residence, a Los Angeles based psychoanalyst and needlepointing enthusiast, offered a workshop at the museum, "Group Therapy + Needlepointing." The program convened a small group of people for eight weekly 90-minute sessions during which participants "pursued self-exploration, discovery and psychological enrichment while engaging with craft and art history" as they needlepointed images based on paintings from the museum's permanent collection. The group's focus was on relationships with an emphasis on identifying and recognizing individual patterns and tendencies. The group met at the museum (privately, behind closed doors) and all sessions were conducted in accordance with California Board of Behavioral Sciences professional standards.

Using art to teach medical professionals about empathy. At Reynolda House Museum of American Art an exhibition was developed from the museum's collection comprised of artists' responding to a major loss. The museum is using the exhibition in collaboration with local medical and healthcare professionals to introduce the notion of using art as an approach to relating empathically to patients and families experiencing loss. The collaboration includes workshops for the healthcare professionals that focus on empathy and compassion during end-of-life care. A journal is available in the gallery to encourage visitors to share their responses and experiences of loss. Gallery conversations are also held within the exhibition

Programs and Materials that Support the Well-Being of Families

Assisting family visitors. The well-being of young children is intimately tied to their family experiences. The more museums make themselves accessible to families and understand the support families need to realize the greatest benefits from museum visits and programs, the more they contribute to well-being in their communities.

Some examples of museums with highly developed family programs and materials include:

Cleveland Museum of Art:

<http://www.clevelandart.org/visit/visitor-information/young-children>

Art Institute of Chicago:

<http://www.artic.edu/visit/visiting-your-family>

High Art Museum, Atlanta, GA:

<https://www.high.org/programs/programs/Family-Programs.aspx>

Hunter Museum of American Art, Chattanooga, TN

<http://www.huntermuseum.org/hunter-kids/>

Walters Art Museum, Baltimore offers extensive programming for very young children, specifically designed for narrow age ranges: 0-12 month; 13-24 month; 2-3 years; 4-5 years; 6-13 years.

<http://thewalters.org/family/artbabies.aspx>

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

<http://www2.mcachicago.org/events/category/programs/studio/family-days/>

Helping families separated by court order. The Providence Children's Museum, noting a need for services for families separated by court order, developed a program that brings the families to the museum together, even if the children are in different foster care settings (Children's Museum Network, 1999). The program involves one-hour weekly sessions for 3-6 months with transportation provided. Although the sessions are specifically designed not to be family therapy sessions, clinically trained staff are on hand to facilitate communication and to model good parenting techniques. An important aspect of the program is that the troubled family is able to be together in a non-institutional, public setting where they can experience the 'normal' activity of a museum visit and have the opportunity to experience the interaction of other, non-troubled families.

Supporting families with special needs children. The Walters Art Museum's *Sensory Morning* program is designed for families of children with sensory processing disorders, and encourages exploration, play, and discovery. Many children and adults with autism experience sensory processing challenges. Through developmentally appropriate opportunities for hands-on learning in the galleries and art studios, children and adults of all levels and abilities are welcome to learn in the museum. Each Sensory Morning program centers on a theme that relates to the Walters collection or a special exhibition and include tours and hands-on activities. Museum educators, occupational and physical therapists, and security officers work to create an environment that is welcoming, engaging, and free of judgment for all.

Free admission. Reduced or free admission is the most commonly found accommodation for low-income visitors. This arrangement may be permanent or may be the result of a gift or grant that makes admission free for a designated period of time. A few examples of strategies used to support family access to museums and their programs include:

Free Sundays. The Portland, OR Art Museum offers free admission on Sundays with programming.

<http://portlandartmuseum.org/learn/family-programs/>

Community Partnerships. The Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA offers studio art classes in collaboration with Path with Art, a local nonprofit organization that provides arts programming to low-income adults recovering from homelessness, addiction, and mental-health challenges. Students must be affiliated with a Path with Art to enroll.

Experiences of Mindful Transcendence

Contemplation audio tour. The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. has recently developed an audio tour that directly aims at the connection between mindfulness and the art museum experience. The tour is accessed by cell phone and includes a combination of meditation directions along with suggestions for how to look more deeply at the art. As described by their press release: *Each tour aims to extend a typical viewing of an artwork from 15-30 seconds to several minutes, and draws from meditative practices that ask visitors to turn inward and pay attention to their bodies and breathing. The audio tour includes stops at some of the most celebrated artworks in the collection, and includes a choose-your-own artwork function* (Phillips Collection, 2015). Participants are urged to take aspects of the experience with them into their daily lives. The tour will be available to the public in November, 2015.

In-gallery contemplative tour. The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles offers a 75-minute contemplative art-viewing session. This program engages participants in mindfulness meditation supported by being in the presence of works of art.

Mindfulness workshop. *Art in the Heart: The Heart-Mind Connection in Viewing Art* was offered by El Segundo Museum of Art (ESMoA), an experimental art laboratory in El Segundo, California. The workshop was developed in partnership with a mindfulness educator. The goals for the workshop were to make attendees aware of the mindfulness meditation practice in the context of an art space and to provide them with a new approach to viewing and experiencing art.

On a day when ESMoA was closed to the public, chairs were arranged in a semi-circle and, in the course of several hours, the mindfulness educator guided 10 participants—museum educators, docents and artists—through mindfulness meditation, mindful art viewing, walking meditation, and discussion. The staff at ESMoA intend to offer a series of 3-hour “Art in the Heart” workshops to continue to explore how mindfulness meditation can be woven into the art viewing experience to enrich it. Furthermore, they will continue to explore what components of this meditation practice can be integrated into museum work through staff training, program development, and interpretation and presentation of art.

Dream-Over. The Rubin Museum of Art in New York City offers a unique adult program clearly related to personal well-being, a dream focused sleepover for adults. The May, 2015 Dream-Over session was led by Khenpo Lama Pema Wangdak, a

teacher of Tibetan Buddhist studies and meditation, who explained the approach to and significance of dreaming in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. He was joined by dream facilitator Dr. William Braun of the New York Psychoanalytic Society a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice.

For the Dream-Over each dreamer was assigned a specific piece of art under which to sleep and dream. Before the Dream-Over, all dreamers answered a Dreamlife Questionnaire which informed the choice of artwork. Dreamers learned upon arrival at the Dream-Over what artwork has been selected for them. Dream gathering was accomplished as the dreamers awoke. They were approached by a Dream Interpreters early in the morning and asked to verbalize their dreams while in a state between sleeping and waking.

Performance artists in residence. In 2010, American performance artist Marina Abramovic performed a piece entitled *The Artist is Present* as part of a larger retrospective for New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). The piece consisted of Abramovic sitting in a chair at a table, inside the museum. She sat all day, every day, from the time the museum opened until it closed every night, for months on end.

Visitors to the museum lined up for a chance to sit across from her. There was no dialogue. There was just the sitting. Some people would sit for a few minutes, others would linger. One man came to sit with Abramovic 21 times over the course of the exhibition. When asked why, his response was: "Sitting with her is a transforming experience—it's luminous, it's uplifting, it has many layers, but it always comes back to being present, breathing, maintaining eye contact."

Many people cried. Sitting across from Abramovic stirred up a range of emotions for them, but their experience really came down to the same thing. The experience of sitting with Abramovic was, for many of them, one of letting go and dwelling fully in the present moment. This was, after all, New York: a city where nobody has time for anything. People are always running around, moving on to the next thing, and here is this woman, in a museum, and she's just sitting. Their curiosity attracted them to the seat across from her.

Museums and Outcomes Related to Well-Being

One time visits. The Crystal Bridges Museum conducted an experimental design study that produced evidence that viewing American art resulted in increases in historical empathy, especially among children who had not been to a museums before.

Intensive teen programs. The intensive teen program model practiced at contemporary art museums was the focus for a research study about long lasting outcomes and the contributions of museums to positive youth development. The study gathered information from teen participants who are now adults, and the results demonstrate the role of the contemporary art museum in contributing to adults' values

for inclusion and experimentation, their confidence with self-expression, their capacity for critical thinking, and their commitment to engagement with their communities – especially through their work with teens.

Summary

The range of activities for a museum to engage in to support well-being is vast. As the examples of current activities demonstrates if a museum is conscious of its contribution to well-being, even some of the most ordinary of activities (i.e., family guides and audio tours) can be deliberately fashioned to maximize their potential for increasing well-being.

But as been stated several times in this review, there is virtually no evaluation or research that demonstrates the connections between museum experiences and well-being and associated concepts like happiness, mindfulness, savoring, and creativity. Perhaps this is, at least in part, due to the fact that few museums consciously embrace benefits to personal and societal well-being as mission-focused outcomes. For any art museum interested in expanding its public value, conscious attention to art and well-being is an obvious area of exploration for programming as well as evaluation and research.

Given the paucity of research about museums and well-being, experimentation with programming and research about well-being, happiness, creativity, savoring, and mindfulness is a ripe area for focus by DAM. The final section of this literature review introduces approaches to research studies and well-being measurement tools that could provide some direction for next steps.

Research & Measurement

Everything that is known about well-being and about the nature of art museums points to the notion that visiting art museums and participating in arts activities and programs enhances well-being. However, when it comes to research, that notion is primarily supported by informal observations and qualitative data collected with varying degrees of informality and there is a need for rigorously designed studies that incorporate quantitative as well as qualitative data.

The kinds of research questions that might be addressed include:

- Which types of arts experiences and activities have the greatest impact on well-being?
- Which aspects of arts experiences and activities contribute most to creativity?
- What are the long-term effects of families making art museum experiences available to very young children?
- Does merely being in an art museum, surrounded by art in an aesthetically pleasing, calming environment, contribute to well-being?
- What are the effects of mindfulness on the experiencing an art exhibit? Do people who are more mindful get more from the experience? Do they get something different from the experience, and if so, what?
- What are the effects of having guidance when experiencing an art museum (e.g. having it suggested by a gallery guide to look at certain aspects of the art or to look in particular ways)?

Measurement

In this section we present measures of well-being and related concepts that are widely used and have been established by research as having good validity and reliability for use with the general public.

Well-Being. Generally, well-being measures are self-administered short questionnaires that ask respondents to indicate, using a rating number, how much a particular concept or brief statement applies to them—e.g. happy; inspired; I've been thinking clearly; I've been feeling closer to people.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) (National Health Service Health Scotland, 2014), is likely the most widely-used measure of wellbeing. It was first developed in 2006 when researchers at Warwick and Edinburgh Universities

were commissioned to validate a well-being measure for the UK (Putz, et.al. 2012). After initial validation, it was included in two national surveys. It has been a core module of the Scottish Health Survey since 2008 as one of the Scottish Government's national indicators. The scale focuses on mental well-being because mental well-being is considered a good indicator of how well people and populations are able to function and thrive (Putz, et.al. 2012, 4).

WEMWBS consists of a list of 14 simple, direct statements (e.g. I've been feeling confident; I've been feeling loved) for which respondents use a rating of 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) to indicate how much the statement applies to them for the last two weeks. A total score is obtained by summing the responses so that there is a possible range of from 14 to 70.

Since its creation, researchers have used the scale with a variety of populations, including teenagers 13 and older. Results support the scale's reliability, validity and applicability with a range of populations. It has also been translated and validated in a number of different languages. The fourteen scale items are as follows:

- I've been feeling optimistic about the future.
- I've been feeling useful.
- I've been feeling relaxed.
- I've been feeling interested in other people.
- I've had energy to spare.
- I've been dealing with problems well.
- I've been thinking clearly.
- I've been feeling good about myself.
- I've been feeling close to other people.
- I've been feeling confident.
- I've been able to make up my own mind about things.
- I've been feeling loved.
- I've been interested in new things.
- I've been feeling cheerful.

UCL (University College London) Museum Measures Toolkit. Recently Thomson and Chatterjee (2014) developed the UCL Museum Measures Toolkit. The toolkit is used to assess "levels of wellbeing arising from participation in museum and gallery activities and has been trialed across the UK" (Thomson & Chatterjee, 2013, 1). The focus is on self-reported changes in mood and emotion as "these aspects of well-being are the ones that are likely to change as a result of a short intervention, such as participating in a museum or gallery activity" (Thomson & Chatterjee, 2013, 1).

Based on analysis of existing measures of generic well-being, "Wellbeing Measures Umbrellas" were developed. The basic umbrella consists of six terms representing positive emotions (enthusiastic, excited, happy, inspired, active, alert), and six terms representing negative emotions (distressed, irritable, nervous, scared,

unhappy, upset). Each term is rated from one to five reflecting the degree to which respondents feel that it applies to them. Slightly different terms were used in forms of the Umbrella for use with older adults and with younger adult populations.

The forms are called umbrellas because the researchers devised a design for presentation of the questionnaire that resembles an umbrella, though the items can also be presented in the traditional format as a list of statements or terms. A short version that uses only the statements of positive emotions has been validated. The scale is straightforward, easy to administer and quick to score by summing the individual ratings. Preliminary research indicates that the scale provides a valid measure of mood and short term mood change.

The Cantril Self-Anchoring Striving Scale (Cantril, 1965) has been included in several Gallup research initiatives, including Gallup's World Poll of more than 150 countries, representing more than 98% of the world's population, and Gallup's in-depth daily poll of America's wellbeing (Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index; Harter & Gurley, 2008).

The Cantril Self-Anchoring Scale, developed by pioneering social researcher Dr. Hadley Cantril, consists of the following:

- Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top.
- The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you.
- On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (ladder-present)
- On which step do you think you will stand about five years from now? (ladder-future)

These tests were conducted in datasets from more than 150 countries throughout the world. After studying the appropriate cutoff points on each of the ladder-present and ladder-future, the scales were combined to form a "Life Evaluation Well-Being Index".

Based on statistical studies of the ladder-present and ladder future scale and how each relates to other items and dimensions as outlined above, Gallup formed three distinct (and independent) groups, for summary purposes:

- Thriving – well-being that is strong, consistent, and progressing. These respondents have positive views of their present life situation (7+) and have positive views of the next five years (8+). They report significantly fewer health problems, fewer sick days, less worry, stress, sadness, anger, and more happiness, enjoyment, interest, and respect.

- Struggling – well-being that is moderate or inconsistent. These respondents have moderate views of their present life situation OR moderate OR negative views of their future. They are either struggling in the present, or expect to struggle in the future. They report more daily stress and worry about money than the "thriving" respondents, and more than double the amount of sick days. They are more likely to smoke, and are less likely to eat healthy.
- Suffering – well-being that is at high risk. These respondents have poor ratings of their current life situation (4 and below) AND negative views of the next five years (4 and below). They are more likely to report lacking the basics of food and shelter, more likely to have physical pain, a lot of stress, worry, sadness, and anger. They have less access to health insurance and care, and more than double the disease burden, in comparison to "thriving" respondents.

Well-Being and Young People. In the UK, The Children's Society conducts ongoing research on children's subjective well-being. Its most recent report of annual findings (Children's Society, 2015) describes their well-being framework and makes an important distinction between studying young people's well-being and their well-becoming. The first emphasizes a child's assessment of life as a child; the concept of "well-becoming" places more attention on characteristics of the young person's development that suggest a productive or troubled adulthood.

The Children's Society's work is supported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and based on a review of subjective well-being research, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress concluded that it is indeed possible to collect meaningful and reliable data on subjective well-being, and to use the data to inform policy making.

This review did not uncover any use of the UK's work on childhood well-being in the United States. The findings from England, however, suggest that investigation of access to and participation with art museums and programs may be warranted. Among the consistently most important contributors to children's well-being are items like: importance of spending time with family and friends; doing activities they enjoy; and an acknowledged value for both formal and informal learning activities. The availability of safe and pleasant spaces and opportunities to relieve stress, worry and anxiety are also highly valued by children and contribute to their overall well-being.

Happiness. *The Subjective Happiness Scale* is an easy to administer measure. Although it consists of only four items, it is considered to have good reliability and validity based on data collected from 14 different samples (a total of 2,732 adults, high school and college students including two Russian adult samples). Internal consistency alphas for the samples ranged from .79 to .94 with an average of .86. The mean test-retest alpha was .72. Highly significant correlations with ratings of the respondents' happiness by those close to them (friend, roommate, close relative or spouse) support the validity of the scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Respondents use a 7-point scale to indicate “the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate for you.” The items are:

In general I consider myself (1=not a very happy person; 7=a very happy person)

Compared with most of my peers I consider myself (1=less happy; 7=more happy)

Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you? (1=not at all; 7=a great deal)

Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you? (1=not at all; 7=a great deal)

General happiness tends to be a relatively enduring trait so that it is less amenable to change based on brief experiences. An inventory for the measurement of happiness can be found at the Authentic Happiness Questionnaire Center (University of Pennsylvania, 2015). Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) now-famous *Experience Sampling Study* (a.k.a. Beeper Study) was a particularly inventive way to make happiness a measurable phenomenon. A group of teenagers were given beepers that went off during random times throughout the day. They were asked to record their thoughts and feelings at the time of the beeps. Most of the entries indicated that the teens were unhappy, but Csikszentmihalyi found that when their energies were focused on a challenging task, they tended to be more upbeat. This and other studies helped shape his seminal work on flow. His studies and subsequent findings gained still more popular interest and he is today considered one of the founding figures of positive psychology.

Children’s Life Satisfaction. For measuring children’s overall life satisfaction, the UK’s Children’s Society (2015) suggests using the following five items with 8-15 year olds, asking them to indicate how much they agree using a five-point scale (0 =strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree). When responses are summed, the scale produces a total life satisfaction of from zero to 20. While reliability data for the scale has not yet been developed, it clearly has face validity in that it asks respondents about how they feel about their lives which is what it claims to measure.

My life is going well.
My life is just right.
I wish I had a different kind of life.
I have a good life.
I have what I want in life.

Mindfulness. The *Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)* has been validated for use with college student and community audiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The version of the scale that measures one's mindfulness state consists of five items that are each rated on a 7-point scale anchored at 0 (not at all), 3 (somewhat), and 6 (very much). A mindfulness score is derived by first reverse scoring and then averaging responses; higher scores reflect more mindful states. The scale is quick and easy to complete and was found to have high internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$). The items are presented as a collection of statements about everyday experiences and respondents are asked to respond to them according to what really reflects their experience rather than what they might think their experience should be. The five items are:

- I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- It seems I am running on automatic without much awareness of what I'm doing.
- I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right not to get to it.
- I find myself preoccupied with the future or the past.
- I find myself doing things without paying attention.

Brown and Ryan (2003) found that the MAAS scale correlates positively with well-being. Its ease of use makes it a potentially good choice for measuring mindfulness of visitors before and after museum experiences.

Savoring. Savoring is related to the mindful experiencing of art. Those who are able to better savor a positive art experience will retain the positive aspects of the experience longer, thus enhancing the original pleasure.

The *Ways of Savoring Checklist* identifies ten different components of savoring, two of which are highly relevant to savoring art—sensory-perceptual sharpening and absorption. Each of these sub-scales is made up of four items each of which is rated using a 7-point scale (1 = definitely does not apply; 4 = applies somewhat; 7 = definitely applies) to reflect what the respondent did while experiencing a positive event such as experiencing art (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, 49-50). The items are as follows:

Sensory-Perceptual Sharpening (internal consistency $\alpha = .73$)

- I tried to focus on certain sensory properties in particular (perhaps blocking out others).
- I opened my eyes wide and took a deep breath—tried to become more alert.
- I tried to slow down and move more slowly (in an effort to stop or slow down time).
- I concentrated and blocked out distractions; I intensified one sense by blocking another.

Absorption (internal consistency $\alpha = .74$)

- I thought only about the present—got absorbed in the moment.
- I closed my eyes, relaxed, took in the moment.

- I made myself relax so that I could become more absorbed in the event or activity.
- I just went through the experience one moment at a time and tried not to look too far ahead.

The other eight components of savoring (each with its own sub-scale with respectable reliabilities of .72 to .89 and made up of 3 to 7 items) are: sharing with others; memory building; self-congratulation; comparing; behavioral expression; temporal awareness; counting blessings; kill-joy thinking. As the scales apply to all life experiences, some of their items do not directly apply to the art museum setting. However, they might prove useful as a basis for developing new museum-focused scales. For example, sharing an experience with others can enhance savoring, so creating original items that ask about sharing perceptions and opinions in an art exhibition might prove useful in research. All items are reported in Bryant and Veroff (2007, 49-50).

Creativity. Creativity is most often assessed by divergent thinking tasks. A stimulus is provided and the respondents are asked to generate as many responses as they can to it. Often the task is to generate alternative uses for common objects (e.g. bricks, pencil, chair) or consequences of hypothetical events (e.g. what would happen if people no longer needed to sleep) (Sylvia, et. al. 2008). Responses are then counted and the respondent is given a *fluency* score. Then responses from the group tested are tallied and each response is awarded a score based on how uncommon it is. In one system, responses that are mentioned by more than one respondent in the group are given a score of zero and those that are only mentioned by one respondent are given a score of one. The uncommonness scores are summed to create the respondent's *uniqueness* score.

The Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, first developed decades ago (Runco, et. al., 2010), are highly respected and widely-used by researchers and educators. Some of the tests call for visual responses while others are verbal. There is a fee for the test booklets and a fee to have them scored. The scoring fee is \$7.40 per student for figural and \$9.30 per student for verbal. They are available from: <http://ststesting.com/2005giftttct.html>.

This review clearly indicates that, although well-being and concepts related to it might be difficult to measure, measures with good psychometric data behind them do exist, and that these measures could be profitably used in research and evaluation into the connections between art museum experiences and well-being.

Well-Designed Museum Research Projects that Address Well-Being

- (1) A well-designed and evaluated school field trip program. (Greene, Kisda, & Bowen, 2014)

While this is about a school program, the study is notable for its measurement of a social well-being indicator, historical empathy. It is also notable for its experimental design.

Researchers working with the new Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas have done an exceptionally good job of putting together a genuine experimental design with random assignment of participants to experimental and control groups. The study they designed provides good evidence for the outcomes *caused* by the museum visit experience. Some of the variables they examined are related to well-being. This more detailed summary is offered because of the high quality of the program plan and evaluation procedures, and because the results are enlightening.

Based on a lottery among those who applied for a museum visit, 40 matched pairs of school groups were selected. From each pair, one was signed to the treatment and one to the control condition so that 40 school groups (N = 1,801 students) were awarded a guided tour of the museum in Spring, 2012. Forty other groups who applied (N = 2010 students) constituted the control group and were not allowed to tour the museum until the following fall.

Those in the treatment group were sent an information packet that included a 5-minute video orientation for students and teachers. The video emphasized that the visit would be student-driven with students being encouraged to talk during their visit. Teachers were also given three images that they were told would be part of the tour along with information about the themes of the tour and important questions to ask their students before the visit. Teachers were asked not to share specific content information about the works of art to try to ensure that students began with their own impressions and ideas when they encountered the art during the tour. Post-visit information material sent to the teachers included information about the works of art and ideas for classroom activities.

The tours were led by paid museum educators who had been trained in the constructivist-based learning approach. For the tour, groups were typically split into two groups of 10-15 and focused intensely on four or five works of art. The goal of the facilitator was to guide student-driven discussion.

Two weeks after the tour experience, all study participants were asked to write a 5 minute response to a work of art. In the essay they were to answer two questions: 1) what's going on in this painting? and 2) what do you see that makes you think that? Essays were coded by two researchers who had established reliability for aspects of critical thinking. Results indicated that differences in critical thinking for students who had the tour were significantly higher than control students when the students were: non-white; rural, living in towns <10K population; on their first visit to the museum; and younger. *The tour had no significant effect for students with the following characteristics: more affluent; white; urban; high school age; with prior museum experience.*

Participants in the study also completed surveys several weeks after the treatment group experienced their museum tours. Results indicated that, when compared to controls, those who participated in the tours showed greater historical empathy (the ability to understand and appreciate what life was like for people who lived in a different time and place), tolerance (openness to alternative viewpoints), and interest in art museums. While an overall impact was discovered, there was almost no effect for urban, white, more affluent students who had had prior museum experiences. *The overall differences were due to the substantial impact of the tour experience on rural, low-income, non-white students who had no prior museum experiences.*

This study suggests that well-planned and executed school visits to art museums produce important outcomes for lower-income, younger, non-white students with no prior museum experiences. Variables examined—critical thinking, historical empathy, and tolerance are related to well-being. Improved critical thinking increases one’s self-confidence, and historical empathy and tolerance are characteristics of people who are not plagued by defensiveness and distrust—people who are psychologically healthy and experiencing higher levels of well-being. Interest in art museums relates to potential for future art museum experiences which can continue to lead to positive well-being outcomes.

(2) Intensive teen arts programs. Whitney Museum of Art (in press)

This study is notable for its focus on well-being outcomes and impact – both for individuals and communities. It is also an example of 4 museums coming together to collaborate on a research project using a practitioner/researcher model.

A recent major evaluation project examined the short and long-term effects of four long-running teen programs at major art museums in different parts of the country (Whitney Museum of Art, in press). These four programs provide a good sampling of how museums are engaging teens in ways that contribute to their well-being with long term positive developmental effects. All involve weekly contact with the group and adult leaders.

Whitney Museum of Art, NY—Youth Insights. Teens build sustained relationships with artists, museum staff, and a supportive community of peers while leading tours, planning events, making and creating art, and developing media projects. Upon completion of the year-long program, teens become eligible to participate in YI Summer Arts Careers, an introduction to arts and museum careers and YI Leaders, a year-long paid internship in which teens lead tours, collaborate with artists and engage a broader youth audience through original programs and events.

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis--Teen Arts Council. A group of high school student artists and art enthusiasts who meet weekly to design, organize, and market events and programs for their peers and the general public. Using Walker exhibitions, films and performances as inspiration, the teen group creates a variety of related programs designed to connect teens to contemporary arts and artists.

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston—Teen Council. This program introduces teens to contemporary art and provided an arts-based incubator for leadership, visual literacy, and life skill development. Teen Council members decide on activities and programs they would like to develop, which change from year to year. Past events have included art markets, exhibitions, fashion shows, film screenings, listening parties, music festivals and poetry readings.

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles--The MOCA and Louis Vuitton Young Arts Program. Teens work with artists, museum professionals, and one another to make art, investigate exhibitions, and plan events through the MOCA and Louis Vuitton Young Arts Program (originally MOCA Mentors, then the MOCA Apprenticeship Program). The program is a paid internship for high school juniors and seniors to learn about the work of the museum by direct involvement. The teens work with museum professionals to investigate current exhibitions and make art. A major activity is planning the museum's Teen Night, a popular annual event.

The four programs were launched between 1992 and 1999 and have generally served 12 to 15 students a year. The evaluation is based on the programs from their beginning through spring 2011. Data came from a number of different sources. When data collection began in 2011, participants and alumni ranged in age from 18 to 36; more than 600 students had participated over the combined lives of the programs. The research team managed to find contact information for 70 to 80% of each program's participants who were then asked to complete an online survey. The survey had a response rate of 67%. Focus groups with alumni of all four museum programs were conducted, and in-depth case studies were conducted with 24 alumni: twelve created Photo Journals that captured their perceptions of the teen program's continuing influence and twelve who had been out of high school 10 years or more created Journey Maps--visual representations of their paths in relation to art, museums, and careers since graduating from the teen program. The maps served to inform probes for the interviews, such as how the teen program experience may have changed a participant's existing relationship to art and museums over time. Administrators and current and former staff were also interviewed.

Results indicated that participation in the teen programs experienced important, positive short- and long-term outcomes. For immediate outcomes, participants indicated that they had experienced positive personal development, increased arts participation, increased leadership skills, increased artistic and cultural literacy and increased social capital. For the long-term, participants reported increased sense of personal identity and self-knowledge, a lifelong relationship to museums and culture, expanded career horizons including greater awareness of arts-related careers, a general world-view grounded in art, and a life that includes high levels of community engagement and influence. The report suggests that the longer term benefits are more than a retention of short-term benefits but, rather, represent an unfolding and continual development of the person in directions that were first set in motion by the benefits they

derived from their program experiences. For example, increased artistic and cultural literacy leads to greater a tendency to develop a world-view grounded in art.

The data also identified program elements that contribute to positive outcomes. Even though the programs differed in specifics, all share the following five fundamental design features that are responsible for their success.

Peer Diversity. Participants are chosen for what they can contribute and how they can benefit from the program rather than for academic or artistic achievements. Recruiting is done through schools, community organizations and outreach to youth and teachers. Recruiting sometimes focuses specifically on reaching underserved youth.

Sustained Engagement with Peers, Staff and the Museum. Participants spend at least one academic year in the program, meeting at least once weekly, after school or on weekends.

Authentic Work. Space, staff, and artists are highly accessible and the teens' work is collaborative, project based, and culminates in visible results such as public programs, events, or exhibitions. Teens feel that museum staff recognize their skills and talents and allow them to make real contributions.

Interaction with Contemporary Art and Artists. Teen connect with working artists, adults who embrace risk, experimentation and questioning in their own work. They learn about the perspective and the working life of artists and about careers in the arts.

Supportive Staff Mentors. Programs are staff-intensive, facilitated by professionals with backgrounds in art education, contemporary art, and youth development, who show teens respect and trust, thus promoting self-confidence.

Summary

There is a wide range of evidence that supports the contributions that art museums make to personal and societal well-being. Large public surveys report that one major reason the general public values museums is because they are associated with well-being. Health care professionals, psychologists, and therapists routinely turn to museums to support themselves and their clients. Theorists and the general public alike easily connect the dots between environments and experiences that foster well-being and the environments, experiences, and benefits that are derived from visits to art museums.

Some museums are consciously exploring their potential for enhancing well-being as part of the public value they bring to individuals and the community. Others express concern about diluting their traditional art-focused missions. It is DAM's choice regarding the direction it takes. One thing is clear - - if the museum directs conscious attention to its role in fostering personal and societal well-being, the general public will

get it. There is every indication that additional research on such an undertaking will affirm to museum staff and stakeholders that the museum does, in fact, contribute to what are often seen as elusive, though very important, outcomes.

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