

Promoting Well-Being

Linking Personal, Organizational,
and Community Change

Isaac Prilleltensky
and
Ora Prilleltensky



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Additional Praise for *Promoting Well-Being*

“In this moving, stimulating and well-written book, Isaac and Ora Prilleltensky give mental health practitioners much insight and practical advice on how to help people in distress understand and address adverse—and adversarial—environments of various kinds.”

—Dan Burston, PhD
Chair, Department of Psychology
Duquesne University

“This book will help a wide audience reflect profoundly on how personal action, and relationships are connected to our collective well-being and vice versa. It is clear, practical, and straightforward. I can see lives being transformed, unjust policies changing, and progressive social movements invigorated by the book’s impact.”

—Tod Sloan, PhD
Professor and Chair, Department of Counseling Psychology
Lewis and Clark College

“This book is written in a highly accessible style and successfully blends theory, research, and personal experience. I particularly like the authors’ introduction of ROWS (Risks, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths) as a practical framework that can enable counselors, consultants, and change agents to develop strategies to promote well-being for clients, organizations, and communities.”

—Geoffrey Nelson
Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology
Wilfrid Laurier University

“*Promoting Well-Being* is a much needed almanac of evidence, stories, exercises, and tools for social change to improve the wellbeing of our people and our planet.

“Perhaps most profound and poignant is Isaac and Ora’s incorporation of suitably holistic models of well-being—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—which together bring greater meaning, purpose, happiness, and fulfilment to life. And isn’t that what we are all yearning for after all?”

—Adam Blakester
Executive Officer
National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Australia

“Whether you view yourself as a practitioner or a policy maker, this book provides a framework and some easily understood tools that will allow you to bring the power of their approach to the challenges of your work.”

—Judge Andy Shookhoff
Associate Director
Vanderbilt Child and Family Policy Center

“Isaac and Ora Prilleltensky have written an astonishingly creative, timely, and important book about the determinants of well-being and about ways to promote and protect

it. All of us in the health field struggle to transcend our disciplinary silos and we all know how difficult it is to succeed. Isaac and Ora help us to see the interconnectedness of our personal, community, and organizational lives; and they demonstrate in refreshingly clear and practical ways how we can integrate these dimensions of our lives. This book could not have come at a better time.”

—S. Leonard Syme, PhD
Professor of Epidemiology and Community Health (Emeritus),
School of Public Health
University of California, Berkeley

“Whether you are a psychologist, social worker, policy maker, physician, organizational consultant, philanthropist, government official, or community organizer, this book will help you understand well-being in new and important ways. The unique integration of the personal, organizational, and collective in promoting well-being is the way of the future, and the Prilleltenskys are leading the way.”

—Dr David Morawetz
Clinical and Counselling Psychologist
Founder and Director, Morawetz Social Justice Fund
Melbourne, Australia

“The approach taken by the Drs. Prilleltensky is to invite the reader into a rich, stimulating conversation, conveying a level of warmth and intimacy that is unique and highly engaging.”

—Ellen Hawley McWhirter, PhD
Associate Professor
Director of Training, Counseling Psychology Program
College of Education
University of Oregon

“Thoughtful attention is paid to inequality, corruption, and resulting poor health. Most interesting to me were the successes of the Nordic cooperative societies that focused on education and social equality and the failures of competitive corporate consumer societies. While the issues are complicated, the tone is informal, conversational, and easy to read. The book is an original and creative effort to tie together a broad range of forces relevant to well-being.”

—George W. Albee, PhD
Emeritus Professor, University of Vermont
Former President, American Psychological Association

“The United Way system is committed to broadening its mission to change community conditions leading to suffering, in addition to addressing the human service needs of individuals. The work of the Prilleltenskys, as presented in *Promoting Well-Being*, has come to life in our transformation and has been a significant part of the success we have had to date and expect to continue to have.”

—Mark H. Desmond
President and CEO
United Way of Metropolitan Nashville

“This book introduces ideas and strategies for wellness: personal, organisational, and community, to a wider and needy public.”

—Dale Guy
Area Service Director
Child Guidance Clinic of Winnipeg, Canada

“This is an eloquent book, broad in scope and ambition, that moves deftly between individual, organizational, and community perspectives to help us understand and promote all dimensions of well-being. Refusing to work with simple explanations and prescriptions, the Prilleltenskys draw on current events, scholarship, and wonderful real-life anecdotes to provide a sweeping and comprehensive picture of what it would take to achieve well-being in our lives, our institutions, and our social systems. This is a ‘must read.’ It is a blueprint for action for counselors, consultants, community organizers, and human service providers interested in individual and social change.”

—Lisa Goodman
Associate Professor of Counseling,
Department of Counseling and Developmental Psychology,
School of Educations
Boston College

“Isaac and Ora Prilleltensky have written a necessary book. A book wanted not only in academic libraries but in the workrooms of practitioners, students, and people interested in introducing in their lives, not the concept of ‘well-being,’ but its practice.”

—Maritza Montero
Coordinator, Doctorate Studies in Psychology
Universidad Central de Venezuela
Caracas, Venezuela

“From the micro to the macro levels, there is something in this book for students, practitioners, and the general public interested in pursuing well-being in families, clinics, workplaces, communities, and government. This book succeeds in bringing together fields that for too long have remained separate.”

—Amiram Raviv, PhD
Professor and former Department Chair, Psychology Department
Tel-Aviv University
Former Chief Psychologist at the Israeli Ministry of Education

“This is an optimistic book that is clearly and persuasively written, using a wealth of psychological knowledge. The Prilleltenskys use humour and real life examples to demonstrate their points. The argument is grounded in serious psychological research and includes practical exercises for moving ahead.”

—Jenny Sharples, PhD
Director, Wellness Promotion Unit
Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

“*Promoting Well-Being* is the right book on a neglected topic. This book is outstanding on several counts: not only considers personal origins and effects of well-being, but also the relational and social; balances analysis and action, scientific causes and moral reasons. It also makes great efforts to integrate the different aspects and levels of wellness in a meaningful, amenable to practice way, trying to make compatible a wide-scoped multifactorial analysis with a practical, action-oriented focus.”

—Alipio Sanchez Vidal
Professor of Ethics and Community Psychology
Universidad de Barcelona

“This book provides a refreshing perspective on well-being—moving away from individualistic and deficit-oriented positions, toward a comprehensive understanding of how organizations and communities affect our sense of well-being. The book reflects a world-view that emphasizes interdependence and optimism about our capacity and duty to care and support one another. I agree with the authors that critical awareness has to become a central component of any efforts to overcome oppression and exploitation, and such awareness can lead people to take steps to transform their own social reality. This book has many practical lessons and applications that students and practitioners would enjoy.”

—Fabricio E. Balcazar, PhD
Professor, Department of Disability and Human Development
University of Illinois at Chicago

“The Prilleltenskys’ bold and wise work make it clear that our efforts to nourish personal psychological well-being in the 21st century have to consider the health of our relationships within the groups and communities we are a part. This book is both theoretically astute and eminently practical, inviting the reader through exercises to put into practice the models for working on personal, organization, and community well-being that are discussed. A clear, concise work, replete with moving examples, *Promoting Well-Being* brings us into the heart of a more interdependent paradigm of healing.”

—Mary Watkins, PhD
Pacifica Graduate Institute

Promoting Well-Being

Linking Personal, Organizational,
and Community Change

Isaac Prilleltensky
and
Ora Prilleltensky



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ©

Copyright © 2006 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at www.copyright.com. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. If legal, accounting, medical, psychological or any other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. In all instances where John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is aware of a claim, the product names appear in initial capital or all capital letters. Readers, however, should contact the appropriate companies for more complete information regarding trademarks and registration.

For general information on our other products and services please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

ISBN-13: 978-0-471-71926-7

ISBN-10: 0-471-71926-9

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To our son, Matan, the gift of our life.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Part I	
Mapping Well-Being	
	1
1 Webs of Wellness: The Sites of Well-Being	3
2 Webs of Growth: The SPEC of Well-Being	31
3 Webs of Values: The Morals of Well-Being	52
4 Webs of Strategies: The Practice of Well-Being	74
Part II	
Personal Well-Being	
	101
5 What Is It? Signs of Personal Well-Being	103
6 Where Does It Come From? Sources of Personal Well-Being	123
7 How to Promote It? Strategies for Personal Well-Being	147
Part III	
Organizational Well-Being	
	169
8 What Is It? Signs of Organizational Well-Being	171
9 Where Does It Come From? Sources of Organizational Well-Being	190
10 How to Promote It? Strategies for Organizational Well-Being	210

Part IV		
Community Well-Being		231
11	What Is It? Signs of Community Well-Being	233
12	Where Does It Come From? Sources of Community Well-Being	259
13	How to Promote It? Strategies for Community Well-Being	283
Part V		
Challenges and Conclusions		307
14	Disability	309
15	Injustice	328
16	Arrogance, Complacency, and Blinders	342
17	Conclusions	353
	<i>References</i>	359
	<i>Author Index</i>	377
	<i>Subject Index</i>	383

Preface

Who are we? If you bought this book (thank you), you deserve to know who wrote it. If you are considering buying it, you need to know why you should spend some of your money on our work. Ora is a licensed counselor with a doctorate in counseling psychology. She is also a wheelchair user, who has lived for most of her adult life with a physical disability. Isaac is a community psychologist. Prior to that, he was a clinician working with children, youth, and families. Each of us has over 20 years of experience in the helping professions, working with children, youth, and adults in schools, clinics, rehabilitation settings, and universities. We have consulted with numerous government and nongovernment agencies in several countries. We have worked with individuals, families, organizations, communities, and governments in four countries: Israel, Canada, Australia, and the United States, in chronological order. We have also published quite extensively in the field. Now we are both academics at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. Ora teaches in the Master's of Counseling Program and Isaac directs the PhD Program in Community Research and Action. Our son, Matan, who has taught us much about everything we know, is a student at Clark University. If you really want to know more about us (though we really don't see why), just Google us or go to www.vanderbilt.edu. But enough about us. Now about you.

For whom did we write this book? This is a book for helping professionals in the health and human services, for organizational and community practitioners, counselors, therapists, educators, consultants, managers, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and just about anyone who is concerned with the promotion of well-being in individuals, groups, organizations, and communities. We immodestly think we have something to say about that.

Why did we write this book? Because we have *chutzpah* (well, at least Isaac does). Beyond that, we saw a need to integrate individual, organizational, and community approaches to the promotion of well-being. For too long, counselors, organizational consultants, and community practitioners have been working in isolation, depriving themselves of insights and opportunities to be more effective and holistic in their work. We felt the need to offer a conceptual framework that would transcend parochial understandings of well-being and dogmatic solutions to complex problems.

What can you expect in this book? A user-friendly treatment of how personal well-being is intimately connected to the well-being of organizations and communities, and some guidelines to pursue communal, organizational, and individual well-being at the same time. You can also find many stories, examples, and exercises designed to bring theory and research as close to your life experience as possible (or so we hope). We strove to write an accessible book that would illustrate the power of thinking and acting on several levels at the same time. We hope this book can help students and professionals integrate values with science in their pursuit of well-being.

What was it like writing this book together? It seemed like a good idea at the time . . . but we still love each other.

ISAAC and ORA PRILLELTENSKY

Nashville (How did we get here?)
February 2006

By the time this book is out, we will have moved to the University of Miami in Florida. Ora will be working in the Department of Educational and Psychological Studies, and Isaac will be the dean of the School of Education.

July 2006

Acknowledgments

Many of the stories and examples we use in the book derive from individuals and organizations that shall remain nameless due to confidentiality. In some cases, we name a few organizations who have given us permission to do so. We are very grateful to all the individuals and groups who have allowed us to be a part of their lives, even if for a short period of time. We have been privileged to work with extraordinary people in various countries. We have learned a great deal from our colleagues and partners in the pursuit of well-being.

We want to thank especially our son, who provided so much material for this book. He is truly a mensch, a compassionate, generous, vivacious, spirited, smart, one-of-a-kind kid who doesn't call his parents often enough.

We have learned a great deal from our students. Graduate students at Vanderbilt University in the New SPECs project in particular have been a source of inspiration and learning. Kimberly Bess and Scot Evans have enriched Isaac's understanding of organizational well-being in many ways. Leslie Collins, Patricia Conway, Carrie Hanlin, Diana McCown, and Courte Voorhees have contributed greatly to the success of the New SPECs project, as have scores of undergraduate and other graduate students interning with us. Their commitment and dedication are second to none. It has also been a privilege working with my esteemed colleagues Bob Newbrough and Doug Perkins on this project.

Since coming to Nashville, we have struck up many friendships with colleagues in the health and human services field. In particular, we have been inspired by the work of Jane Fleishman, Judy Freudenthal, and Hal Cato from Oasis Youth Center, Inc. Isaac has also benefited from his collaboration with Mark Desmond, president and CEO of the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville. Marsha Edwards and Christine Jackson of the Martha O'Bryan Center have also been wonderful collaborators. They have all supported our work and encouraged us to pursue, in partnership, a new paradigm for community health and human services in the pursuit of well-being.

Sherrie Lane, our graduate secretary in the Department of Human and Organizational Development at Vanderbilt University, has helped Isaac in many big and small ways. Thank you, Sherrie.

Our editors at Wiley were very professional and helpful in their handling of our book. We want to thank Katherine Willert, editorial assistant, and Lisa Gebo, senior editor.

We also want to thank the publishers listed below for allowing us to reproduce a few tables and figures from our earlier publications:

- Lawrence Erlbaum for Tables 9.1 and 9.2 (original source: “Value-Based Leadership in Organizations,” by I. Prilleltensky, 2000, *Ethics and Behavior*, 10(2), p. 139)
- Palgrave Macmillan for Tables 13.1 and 13.3 (original source: *Community Psychology: In Pursuit of Liberation and Well-Being*, by G. Nelson and I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), 2005, New York: Palgrave)
- Taylor and Francis for Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 (original source: “Promoting Well-Being: Time for a Paradigm Shift in Health and Human Services,” by I. Prilleltensky, 2005, *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 33, pp. 53–60)

I

Mapping Well-Being

The four chapters in this part answer, respectively, *where*, *what*, *why*, and *how* questions about well-being. Chapter 1 suggests that well-being is situated in individuals, organizations, and communities. To promote one, you need to promote the others. To understand one, you need to understand all of them. Our basic premise is that individual well-being cannot be fostered in isolation from the organizations that affect our lives and the communities where we live. Promoting personal well-being in isolation is inefficient. Personal, organizational, and community well-being exist in a tight web of reciprocal influences. The first chapter situates well-being in individuals, organizations, and communities and in the links that tie them together.

The opening chapter frames well-being in terms of five **Ss**: **Site**, **Sign**, **Source**, **Strategy**, and **Synergy**. Sites refer to the location of well-being, whereas signs refer to the expressions of it. Sources are the determinants of well-being, and strategies are simply ways to enhance it. Synergy is the confluence of sites, signs, sources, and strategies. Synergy pertains to our synergic understanding and our synergic actions.

Chapter 2 deals with a *what* question: What is it that we're specifically trying to promote? What is the paradigm that we want to advance? The answer lies in the acronym SPEC: Strengths, Prevention, Empowerment, and Changing Conditions. We formulate a new paradigm for health and human services based on these four principles. Our prescription is an antidote for deficit-oriented, reactive, alienating, and ecologically insensitive approaches that hope to promote community or organizational well-being one person at a time.

The third chapter answers a *why* question: Why promote personal, organizational, and community well-being? This is a values issue. We postulate values for personal, organizational, and community well-being and discuss their interdependence. Our approach to well-being is firmly grounded in a value-based perspective.

2 Mapping Well-Being

Where, what, why, and now *how*. In Chapter 4 we suggest promoting well-being through I VALUE IT roles. The letters stand for Inclusive host, Visionary, Asset seeker, Listener, Unique solution finder, Evaluator, Implementer, and Trendsetter. By enacting these eight roles, professionals and helpers of any kind can make a difference in the lives of individuals, organizations, and communities. We use this model throughout the book and attach to the roles specific strategies and techniques for change in various contexts.

We think of each chapter as a web: webs of wellness, growth, values, and strategies. Together, these four chapters lay the foundation for the promotion of well-being.

1

Webs of Wellness: The Sites of Well-Being

Sister Margaret was a 72-year-old nun who was suffering from persisting back pain. She was accepted at an outpatient pain management program where I, Ora, was providing psychological consultation. Due to my hectic schedule, I was unable to see Margaret until she was well into her physiotherapy and occupational therapy program. In fact, I was told that she had made significant physical gains and would be discharged from the program in the coming weeks. It was unlikely that I would need to see her beyond the initial screening.

As it turned out, Margaret and I met for some eight counseling sessions. I took an immediate liking to her and appreciated her openness and willingness to share her life story. Margaret, who had never been to a psychologist before, confirmed that her physical pain had significantly subsided. Nonetheless, she had some issues in her life that were weighing her down and causing significant distress. She welcomed the opportunity to explore them.

Over the next 8 weeks, I was privileged to hear about Margaret's life in a Catholic mission. With four other nuns, she was sharing a small house owned by the parish. They were all assigned to live there by a central committee in charge of housing. According to the custom in that congregation, the cooking, cleaning, and other household tasks were shared among the housemates. Meals were eaten together, and weekly meetings were held to discuss the budget, plan the week ahead, and make joint decisions. Most of the day was dedicated to different aspects of community work and social action.

I am sharing this with you as it provides the backdrop for Margaret's struggle for personal, organizational, and community well-being. Margaret committed her life to serving God and the community. Working as a public health nurse until her retirement, she was highly committed to serving underprivileged members of the community. In addition to her nursing job,

she volunteered her time for various social justice initiatives. Margaret certainly gave to her community.

Yet, Margaret was unhappy and frustrated when she came to see me. She told me about the deaths of her brother and a close friend in the past year. She told me about how she now spends most of her time in the house as she is no longer working and is unsure what contribution she can make. Most important, Margaret told me about the distress associated with her current living arrangement.

Of the four women she was house-sharing with, Margaret was close to one, on agreeable terms with two others, and at great odds with the fourth. The more she talked about this conflictive relationship and the distress that it was causing, the more apparent it became that these issues were never properly addressed. These women, who were assigned to live together by an organizational committee, had no tools to address their differences and resolve conflict.

Ironically, the high value attributed to harmony and the greater good stood in the way of personal and organizational well-being. Margaret told me that in the weekly meetings, nothing of substance was discussed, no feelings were shared, and feedback was never offered. In fact, Margaret reasoned that the congregation had totally neglected members' need for control over their lives, for emotional connectedness, and for personal validation.

Throughout our work together, Margaret and I searched for ways to enhance psychological wellness at the personal, organizational, and community levels. She decided that it was time to make some changes in the overall philosophy of the congregation, placing greater emphasis on personal empowerment, agency, and control. We planned how she could approach those at the top of the organizational hierarchy with her suggestions. On the interpersonal front, Margaret was determined to instigate some in-house changes.

Things had gotten so bad that she was uncomfortable making references to her back problems and was doing chores that were clearly counterindicated for her condition. We discussed the irony of living with people who are committed to equality and justice on the outside and who are oblivious to the needs of those on the inside.

Margaret took great interest in some of the resources I lent her on interpersonal communication and problem solving. We discussed the possibility that part of each weekly house meeting would be dedicated to sharing feelings and giving constructive feedback. She thought that this might work, especially if strengths were acknowledged and positive feedback was also provided.

What about community well-being? Margaret had been finding some of her house chores exhausting and often had back pain as a result. We reasoned that a redistribution of tasks was called for. Some of the younger housemates would take on the more physically demanding chores, affording

Margaret more time and energy to pursue community work. Margaret thought that this would work, as the problems were never really about chores but about poor interpersonal and organizational communication.

We began to discuss Margaret's reinvolvement in the community work that she so valued and missed. I have to say that I was of relatively little help to her in this domain. Margaret could teach me, and I suspect many others, about ways to contribute to one's community.

Sister Margaret's story says a great deal about the three main topics of this book: personal, organizational, and community change for well-being. Her story shows the interdependence of these three facets of life. Her personal well-being was being diminished by the lack of organizational wellness in her living arrangements. Community well-being, a big part of her life, was also being affected by her health and emotional state. The more she contributed to community well-being, the better she felt.

WHY THIS BOOK?

Personal, organizational, and community change influence each other in multiple ways. If we want to promote one, we need to know about the others. If we want to understand one, we need to understand how they all interact. This is the mission of this book: to understand how personal, organizational, and community well-being are part of a web, a web of wellness. A change in one affects the others; an improvement in one increases the chances of betterment in others. Building on knowledge about networks and interactions, we want to show how personal, organizational, and community change can work in unison to enhance the well-being of individuals and the community alike.

The lessons we want to share can be helpful to those working with people in multiple contexts and settings: health and human services, schools, community agencies, businesses, universities, government and nongovernment organizations, grassroots movements, and in general all people who have an interest in promoting their own well-being and the health and prosperity of others.

If you're in the helping business, we hope you will find here strategies that go beyond the dogmatic application of theories and practices that concentrate on single sources of well-being. Wellness is a complicated issue that defies simplistic explanations and magic solutions. Yet, we believe a methodical and comprehensive approach to wellness can help us get unstuck, individually, organizationally, and collectively.

Missed Opportunities

Many problems have biological, social, and economic as much as psychological roots. People suffer because of lack of resources and power inequality,

but also because of psychological put-downs, verbal and emotional abuse, and plain disrespect.

There is good reason to make health and the economy social priorities; people require these resources to meet basic needs. But it would be a mistake to neglect the importance of psychological wellness, for the lack of it is costing us millions of dollars in health care and lost productivity, not to mention immeasurable psychological pain.

There is much to be gained from educating ourselves about the benefits of empathy, effective communication, and social skills. We teach children all kinds of things, but we neglect psychological wellness: how to deal with personal feelings like anger, frustration, and aggression; how to listen to others without judging; how to cry without feeling guilty.

No, we're not suggesting that psychological wellness is a panacea for our social ills, nor that it should be our single focus of attention. But the fact is that we have a great deal of knowledge about how to improve human relationships that we don't use. There is a tremendous body of research that informs the development of psychological wellness, but it is largely wasted. As a society, we don't have a plan for systematically developing interpersonal and psychological health. There is a huge gap between what we know and what we do in families, schools, and the workplace.

Many problems could be prevented if we methodically fostered psychological wellness in families, schools, and jobs. Families are ideal places for the promotion of emotional wellness. Unfortunately, many parents are not equipped to teach it to their children because they lack it themselves. We know that a secure attachment is crucial for psychological development, that consistent rules with emotional support are highly beneficial, and that family cohesion protects children against adversity. However, secure attachments, effective parenting, and family harmony are not easy to come by.

Although parenting courses are offered to the public, not all parents realize how crucial it is to learn from others and to obtain support in this life-long endeavor. In Sweden, there is a major national campaign to teach parenting throughout the life cycle. In Ontario, Canada, there is currently a push to make parenting courses mandatory in schools.

Schools are another ideal site for the development of psychological wellness. We have no doubt that many teachers foster in children interpersonal respect, sensitivity to others, and the desire for conflict resolution. Their excellent efforts notwithstanding, this type of instruction is rarely systematic or an integral part of the regular curriculum. Social and emotional learning improves school climate and tolerance, reduces bullying, and helps children to resist pressure to smoke, drink, and engage in premature sex. Yet, we're still waiting for these findings to be implemented and institutionalized.

Interpersonal conflict at work is a major source of stress for millions of people. Insensitive bosses, inflexible rules, and weak leadership are major causes of aggravation. People stay home because of conflict, go to incred-

ible lengths to avoid certain people at work, endure put-downs, and suffer from negative working environments. Many people in positions of authority don't have a clue how to treat others. Workplaces should do much more than they currently do to train managers and workers in psychological wellness.

Interpersonal harm cannot be completely prevented, but much can be done to curtail it. Both of us have seen firsthand the pain that interpersonal harm can cause and the benefits that prevention can bring. To improve personal well-being, we need to intervene at the organizational and community levels. It is not enough to undertake one-on-one therapy, however helpful that might be. As we shall see in this book, community changes can lead to more equality, more justice, and more respect for diversity.

Sins of Omission, Sins of Commission

Each of us, Ora and Isaac, has more than 20 years of experience working as psychologists, counselors, teachers in schools and universities, and consultants in organizations and government. We have worked in clinics, counseling centers, rehabilitation hospitals, schools, and universities in four countries: Israel, Canada, Australia, and the United States. Wherever we have worked, we have witnessed sins of omission and sins of commission.

We have felt these sins not only in our professional lives, but in our personal lives as well. How often do we fail to attend to a child's need for attention? How often do we neglect to inquire about a peer's well-being? People close to us make affectionate gestures that we ignore because we're too busy or preoccupied. These are sins of omission.

What about sins of commission? Are you sick of people telling you how to live your life? For us, a sin of commission is when others try to shape or control your life in ways that don't make sense or don't feel right for you. How many people have given you unsolicited advice or tried to impose on you a point of view that didn't respect who you are or didn't appreciate your emotional state? In Isaac's case, the worst unsolicited advice he ever got was to "be a man" and not to cry.

We are very concerned with one-size-fits-all therapies and types of advice that don't respect your unique situation. Have you ever shared a problem with a friend or professional helper, only to find out that this person was so eager to give you advice that he or she didn't even listen to the whole story? Details are important. General advice that doesn't seriously consider your unique personality or family situation doesn't work. We've seen this time and time again in our professional and personal lives.

Some of our counseling students are so eager to give advice that they sometimes jump to conclusions before the client has had a chance to share the whole story. Yet, they wholeheartedly admit that what they value most is for others to listen to them without interruptions. Our friends sometimes

respond judgmentally to some of our decisions because of their personal issues, not because our decision is necessarily wrong. Some of them hasten to offer advice that is based not on our needs but on theirs. Not only that, some of the advice we get is based on others' insecurities, unfinished business, or projections or other defense mechanisms that reflect their own unresolved issues and not ours.

We're also very concerned about prefabricated advice. A cookie-cutter type of help is not suitable for human beings. We're not as malleable as dough, nor are we like the previous cookie. And one-line mantras don't fit into our lives because our lives can't be reduced to one line.

We doubt we're beyond reproach ourselves, though. Both of us have offered plenty of unsolicited advice to our son. We're sure that Matan, our 19-year-old son, has had to endure more than his fair share of parental sins, which probably accounts for his occasional parental deafness.

To overcome sins of commission we need an antidote for arrogance. To overcome sins of omission we need antidotes for blindness and passivity. Both of us have developed some antidotes. For the sin of arrogance, we try not to make assumptions about people before we know them well. We don't presume to know more than we do, and we refrain from giving advice that doesn't suit the person or the occasion. Although sometimes we think a particular opinion may help somebody, we know that the timing may not be right. If the timing is not right, the person won't be in the right frame of mind to hear or assimilate the advice. Finally, we try not to commit character assassinations by telling clients or colleagues that they are "defensive," "immature," or "fixated" on certain issues.

To avoid the sins of blindness and passivity we try to see beyond the obvious, and we try to act beyond the comfortable. As a psychologist, a counselor, consultant, friend, or a parent, it's very easy to ascribe emotional problems to the person in front of you. After all, she is the person seeking advice or making your life miserable. But the person in front of you may be reacting to family or social circumstances that are bringing her down, not to some deep-seated psychological trauma we should cure. Furthermore, she may be reacting to the fact that *you* are making her life miserable!

We have to see people in context. No matter how strong our tendency to blame people for their misfortune, we should see the personal, interpersonal, organizational, and social components of their problems.

In fact, it's always comfortable to think of problems in terms of other people's psychological issues because they don't require us to change something about ourselves, our family, or our society. Our friends and relatives are uncomfortable when our behavior doesn't suit their expectations. Does that mean we have to change our behavior, or that they have to change their expectations? When Isaac became a vegetarian, his Argentinian meat-eating family had a hard time accepting his new habit.

To overcome the threat of passivity, we have to think about helping people on their own terms. Furthermore, we have to think about help that addresses the psychological, the interpersonal, and the social as well, even if it goes against the received wisdom that “it’s all in your head.”

A little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. If all we have is a hammer, all our problems are going to look like nails. If we know how to use only a psychological hammer, all our sources of suffering will look like psychological nails. We favor a holistic approach that incorporates a range of theories and techniques and that tries to match the solution to the problem, not the other way around: trying to make everything look like nails because all we’ve got is a hammer. To move beyond our comfort zone we have to contemplate various sources of suffering and multiple ways of addressing them.

How, you ask, is our toolbox different? We believe in your own expertise and in your ability to create a path of wellness for yourself and others. We think we all need help in seeing things more clearly, in avoiding arrogance, in illuminating blind spots, and in moving beyond our comfort zones. Our approach to wellness builds on personal, organizational, and community change to promote personal, organizational, and community well-being at the same time. It’s not one or the other: It’s the collective synergy that makes for holistic wellness.

It’s not enough to be free of anxieties, fears, and obsessions to experience psychological wellness. We need to experience satisfaction in relationships, and we need to live in thriving communities. Many approaches to emotional health fail to grasp the importance of social settings.

Psychological changes often need to be accompanied by changes in families, relationships, organizations, and communities. We often blame victims and expect them to change something within themselves when in fact something external, oppressing them, needs to be changed. When we struggle to change the social context we help ourselves by feeling empowered and in control of our lives. In this book, we go beyond the personal, the interpersonal, and the social. We integrate the three perspectives to offer a holistic view of wellness. Throughout the book we search for psychological wellness in unlikely places that combine the personal, the organizational, and the collective. What we invariably find is that psychological wellness is always better promoted and better preserved when personal, organizational, and community needs come together at once.

THE FIVE Ss OF WELL-BEING: SITE, SIGN, SOURCE, STRATEGY, AND SYNERGY

We can talk about the well-being of a person, an organization, or a community. These are different *sites* where well-being takes place. We can tell by certain signs if each one of these sites or places is experiencing well-being. A sign of personal well-being is a sense of control over your life, something

that Sister Margaret had in short supply. Many decisions about her life were being made by the organization, without a lot of input from her. Physical health is another sign of personal well-being. Sister Margaret was suffering from physical pain that also diminished her well-being.

Worker participation in decision making is a sign of organizational well-being. Good communication among workers and colleagues is another. Clear roles and productivity are also important signs of organizational well-being. Sister Margaret's organization was definitely not showing some of these signs. Communication among housemates and with the church was poor.

A clean environment, freedom from discrimination, safe neighborhoods, good schools, and employment opportunities are signs of community well-being. These are communal goods that benefit everyone. Sister Margaret worked with the poor, a group that is often deprived of these resources.

The next *S* stands for *sources*. Personal, organizational, and community well-being derive from a variety of sources. Experiences of mastery and success contribute to self-esteem and personal well-being, and participatory structures, clear roles, and efficient practices bring about organizational wellness. Community well-being, in turn, derives from multiple sources, such as a sense of cohesion, belonging, equality, universal access to health care, and democratic traditions.

The fourth *S* is for *strategies*. To promote well-being in each of the sites of interest—persons, organizations, and communities—we need a plan of action. Sister Margaret chose to discuss the division of labor in the house and made a decision to communicate better her concerns. She also worked on her physical ailments and had some ideas about promoting community well-being among the poor and disadvantaged.

Synergy, the fifth *S*, comes about when we combine an understanding of sources and strategies. In accord with the concept of webs, the best results for any one site of wellness come about when we work on all fronts at the same time. Sister Margaret could not improve her back unless she addressed the organizational communication problems, nor could she improve her mood while feeling isolated. Personal solutions often include organizational solutions. Organizational solutions, in turn, are supported by collective norms of respect for the well-being of workers and by communal expectations of ethical practice. When collective norms weaken, corporations and public institutions cease to be responsive to community needs. Personal, organizational, and community solutions are closely linked. We create synergy among various solutions when we address a problem on multiple fronts at the same time.

If you work in human services, you know the experience of working with clients on a strategy, only to see it diminished by overwhelming social forces. How far can you go in helping a teenager feel safer when he goes back to a crime-infested neighborhood? How effectively can we curb vio-

lence against women when the media and the culture are full of it? Collective problems require collective solutions.

Although there are things we can do to help people individually, such as making fitness plans, offering assertiveness training, and teaching communication skills, many of these problems are organizational and communal, and as a result they demand organizational and communal solutions. This book is about ways to tackle personal, organizational, and communal issues at the same time. We have tried doing one at a time, and it hasn't worked very well. It surely hasn't worked for many of the problems that health and human service workers face, problems such as child abuse, addictions, poverty, diabetes, crime, teenage pregnancy, gang violence, poor parenting, educational underachievement, obesity, and unemployment. The time has come to address problems comprehensively and synergistically. Research has shown that the mere act of working with others on collective problems can improve self-esteem, self-efficacy, social support, and empowerment. It is not only the outcome that matters, but the process itself (Nelson, Lord, & Ochocka, 2001). Of course we wish to be successful in our efforts to eliminate child abuse and violence against women, but even if results are not readily apparent, we, and all the people who struggle against these issues, derive personal benefits from the struggle itself. This is in part how the helper-therapy principle operates: I help myself by helping others—in my family, my circle of friends, and the community (Reissman, 1965).

To promote well-being we need an understanding of its main constituents. To recap: Well-being consists of sites, signs, sources, strategies, and synergy. There are three primary sites of well-being (personal, organizational, and collective), each of which has specific signs or manifestations, sources or determinants, and strategies. Once we understand what well-being is all about, we can identify the most promising approaches to its maximization.

Various traditions within the health and social sciences have concentrated on either personal or collective correlates as manifestations of well-being. Whereas psychology has focused on subjective reports of happiness, well-being, and psychological wellness (Seligman, 2002), sociology and public health have focused on collective and objective measures, such as longevity and infant mortality (Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999). A group of medical sociologists and investigators has also concentrated on the importance of relationships, an important part of personal and organizational well-being (Berkman, 1995). Our claim is that well-being is not one or the other, but rather the combination of personal, organizational, and collective sites, signs, sources, and strategies of well-being (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). In other words, well-being is not either personal, organizational, or collective, but the integration of them all. For any one of these spheres—personal, organizational, or collective—to experience well-being, the other two need to be in equally good shape.

In our view, well-being is a positive state of affairs, brought about by the synergistic satisfaction of personal, organizational, and collective needs of individuals, organizations, and communities alike. There cannot be well-being but in the combined presence of personal, organizational, and collective wellness (I. Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). We use well-being and wellness interchangeably in this book, and we refer to psychological wellness as a state of affairs in which the person feels that his or her personal, organizational, and collective needs are fulfilled. Of course, these definitions beg the question “What are the needs of well-being at each one of the personal, organizational, and collective levels?” Table 1.1 shows the main needs that we have to fulfill to experience personal, organizational, and community well-being. In addition, Table 1.1 displays the values associated with each one of these needs. Needs require actions, and actions require values to guide them. We uphold these values to promote, morally and responsibly, actions that meet the needs for well-being. Without them we could not know what the most ethical way to behave is.

Sites of Well-Being

As noted earlier, sites refer to the location of well-being. Here we concern ourselves with *where* well-being is situated. We maintain that there are three primary sites of well-being: individual persons, organizations, and communities or collectives. Although we can distinguish among the well-being of a person, an organization, and a community, they are highly interdependent. Each of these entities is unique and dependent on the others at the same time. None can be subsumed under the others, nor can they exist in isolation. They are distinguishable sites, but inseparable entities all the same. Figure 1.1 makes it clear that the three sites of well-being are separate but interconnected at the same time. Well-being is like a three-legged stool: Take any one of the legs, and the stool collapses.

There is empirical evidence to suggest that the well-being of relationships in informal and formal organizations such as families and work has beneficial effects on individuals (Ornish, 1998). Likewise, there is a wealth of research documenting the deleterious consequences for individuals of deprived communities and the advantageous consequences of prosperous communities (Hofrichter, 2003).

Communities as sites of well-being embody such characteristics as affordable housing, clean air, accessible transportation, and high-quality health care and education. All these factors take place in the physical space of communities. Organizations, in turn, are sites where exchanges of material (money, physical help) and psychological (affection, caring, nurturance) resources and goods occur. People work for money, but not only for money. Exchanges of affirmation and appreciation, in both informal and formal organizations, are a vital part of participation in organizations. Persons,

Table 1.1 Basic Needs and Values for Personal, Organizational, and Community Well-Being

		Sites of Well-Being				
Basic Considerations		Personal Well-Being	Organizational Well-Being	Community Well-Being		
Needs	Mastery, control, self-efficacy, voice and choice, skills, growth, spirituality	Emotional and physical well-being	Effectiveness, sustainability, productivity, clear roles	Participation, involvement, dignity, and respect for identity	Sense of community, cohesion, formal support	Economic security, shelter, clothing, nutrition, access to vital health and social services
Values	Self-determination, freedom, and personal growth	Health, caring, and compassion	Accountability and responsiveness to common good, transparency	Collaboration and democratic participation, respect for human diversity	Support for community structures	Social justice
Definition of values	Promotion of ability of children and adults to pursue chosen goals in life	Protection of physical and emotional health, expression of caring and support	Promotion of transparent ethical behavior and procedures to protect and uphold the well-being of all stakeholders affected by an organization's activities	Promotion of fair processes whereby children and adults can have meaningful input into decisions affecting their lives, respect for diverse social identities	Promotion of vital community structures that facilitate the pursuit of personal and communal goals	Promotion of fair and equitable allocation of bargaining powers, obligations, and resources in society



Figure 1.1 The Synergy of Well-Being.

finally, are sites where feelings, cognitions, and phenomenological experiences of well-being reside. In this book we sometimes also refer to interpersonal wellness, which is not a site of wellness per se, but an important aspect of relationships in families, organizations, and communities. Interpersonal wellness can be a sign of personal well-being, as in feelings of caring and compassion that we experience in close relationships, and also a sign of organizational well-being, as in respect for diversity and participatory structures. It can also be an expression of community well-being, representing signs of belonging, solidarity, and cohesion. Interpersonal or relational wellness is the glue that connects personal, organizational, and community wellness.

We have to be able to honor the uniqueness of the three sites of well-being and their interdependence at the same time. We can have a community endowed with excellent jobs, schools, parks, and hospitals where many people feel miserable because relationships in the community are acrimonious or alienating. If we thought of well-being only in terms of community, we would miss the experiential component of personal well-being and the influential role of organizations and relationships in advancing personal satisfaction. Conversely, we can have a select group of people who, despite poor community conditions, experience high levels of well-being because of privilege. In this case, exclusive focus on the well-being of these people might miss the need to heal, repair, and transform the community conditions (poverty, discrimination, epidemics) that are diminishing the well-being of those who cannot protect themselves.