

# Defining What Matters

## Learner Packet with Instructor Notes

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**Summary:** This lesson engages students in hands-on activities to explore fundamental questions: *What is well-being and happiness? What do we want out of life, both at the individual and community level?* (30 min.)

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1) What do we need for a fulfilling life?	Students generate the ingredients of well-being as they consider how individual and community well-being are related. (15 min.)	3
2) Discussion prompts	Discussion and activity prompts enable students to re-evaluate core concepts such as needs, wants, quality, and quantity. Useful for on-line threaded discussions. (15 min.)	5

# Instructor Notes

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## Suggested use and prerequisite learning

This lesson engages students in hands-on activities to explore fundamental questions: What is well-being and happiness? What do we want out of life, both at the individual and community level? The lesson is designed to begin a unit or course on the Ecological Footprint, product life cycles, energy, economics, or other topics.

Subscribers to Creative Change's Curriculum and Resource Center (CRC) can see specific ways to sequence these lessons as part of broader EF modules in the Ready-made Units section of the CRC. (Access may vary depending on subscription type.)

## Outcomes and Assessment

<b>Big Ideas: As a result of the activity students will understand that</b>	<b>Assessment: Students demonstrate their knowledge as they:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All people share certain needs for a fulfilling life; wants vary.</li><li>• Systems are interdependent elements that work together. Our needs are supported through the interdependence of human and natural systems.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generate/prioritize needs and wants.</li><li>• Describe elements of human and natural systems.</li><li>• Give examples of interdependence.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Commons are natural and human-made gifts that sustain life.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify natural and human-created elements that contribute to well-being, and describe how these elements work together.</li></ul>

## Differentiation

- Enable students to present information in multiple ways: discussion, graphics, poster, etc.
- Because the activities engage students in discussing their wants, needs, and goals, the lesson becomes customized to students' interests and experiences.

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## Activity 1) What do we need for a fulfilling life?

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In this activity, you will work with a partner and generate the elements needed for health and well-being, either at the individual or the community level. One person will answer for each perspective.

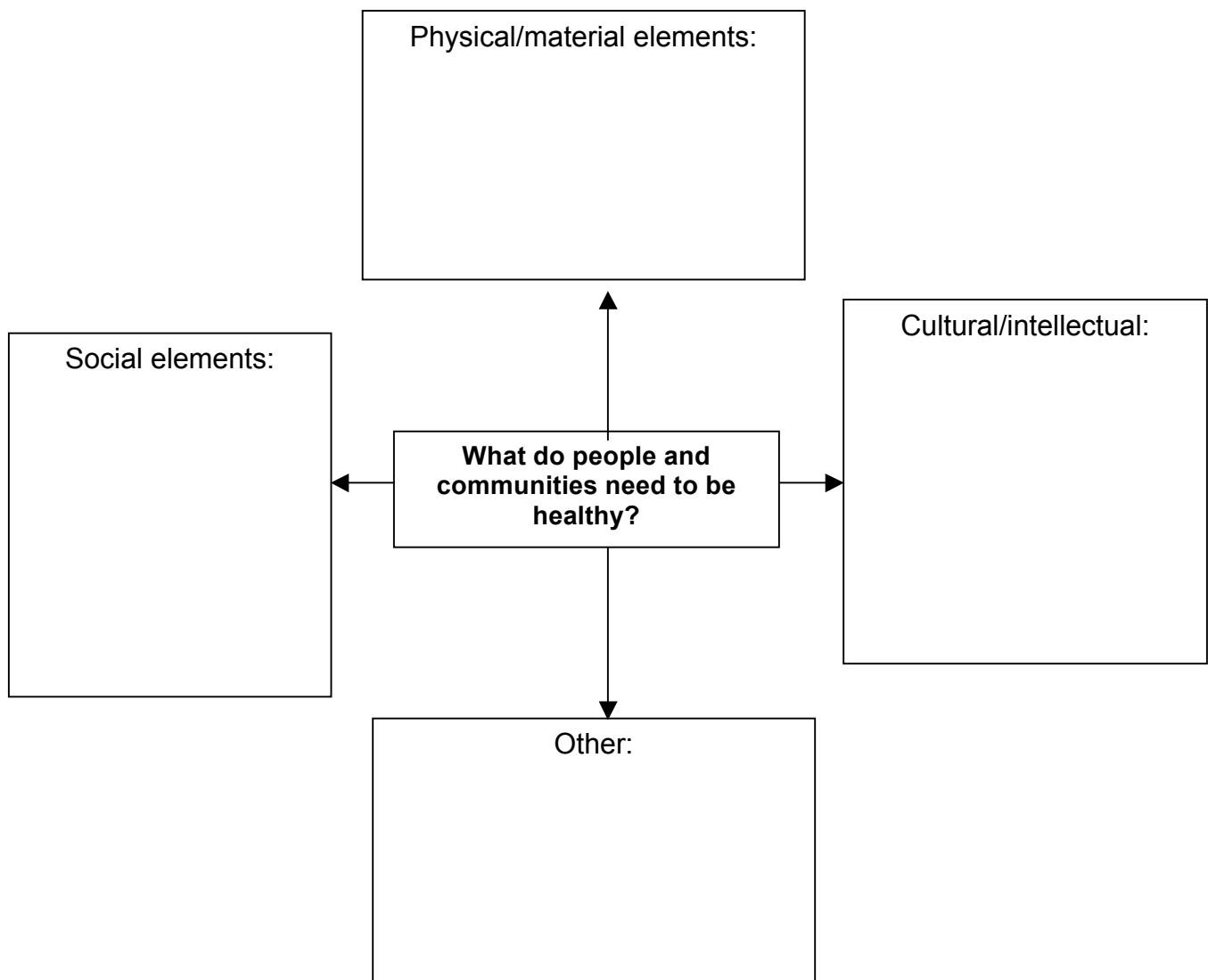
There are two ways to respond: You can use the diagram below and change the categories if desired. (Each person should respond on his/her own diagram.) You can also use the checklists on the next page.

When you are done, compare responses with your partner and consider these questions:

- What are some differences and similarities in your responses? How would you account for this?
- What are common needs between individuals and communities? How is individual well-being related to community well-being?

### Option A: Brainstorming

- Individual level: What do people need to be happy and healthy?
- Community level: What are the elements of strong and healthy communities?



## Activity 1) What do we need for a fulfilling life?

### Option B: Survey

#### Individual level: *Do you have what it takes to be happy?*

- What does it take to be happy? People have pondered this for centuries. More recent research points to certain “ingredients” essential to a fulfilling life (Ben-Shahar, 2007; Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R., 2008). Some of these elements are listed in the left column. Circle or check off the items in the left column that are part of your life.

#### Community level: *Does your community have what it needs to thrive?*

- The elements in the right column are considered important to community safety, health and well-being<sup>1</sup>. Review the list and check off the items you think most people in your community have access to. Be ready to justify your answer.

Individuals	Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to healthy and affordable food</li> <li>• Safe and comfortable housing/neighborhood</li> <li>• Energy needs: electricity, heating, cooling, fuel for cooking and transportation</li> <li>• Access to health care</li> <li>• Reliable transportation</li> <li>• Good friends</li> <li>• Respect from your peers</li> <li>• Spiritual/religious practice</li> <li>• Meaningful activities and goals: work, hobbies, schooling</li> <li>• Strong family relationships</li> <li>• Supportive relationships in the community</li> <li>• Time to rest, relax and have fun</li> <li>• Access to nature/outdoors</li> </ul> <p><b>Add other elements:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to healthy and affordable food</li> <li>• Healthy environment: clean air, water</li> <li>• Safe and comfortable housing/neighborhood</li> <li>• Educational opportunities</li> <li>• Home/building energy needs: electricity, heating, cooling, cooking</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Access to health care</li> <li>• Affordable and reliable transportation system</li> <li>• Freedom to choose spiritual/religious practice</li> <li>• Justice, equity and fairness</li> <li>• Economic systems that provide meaningful jobs at living wages</li> <li>• Strong family and community relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>Add other elements:</b></p>

<sup>1</sup> The list reflects ideas in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the Human Development Report, two important documents focused on advancing well-being at the individual, national, and international levels. Learn more at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

## Activity 2) Discussion questions and prompts

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Below are additional concepts related to the question, “What really matters?” Select a concept set and use the activities and discussion prompts to explore the ideas.

### Concept Set 1: Needs and wants, rich and poor, wealth and poverty

1. What is the difference between needs and wants?
2. How are our needs determined? How are our wants and desires shaped?
3. Can you think of a time when a want became a need, or a need became a want?
4. Based on your list of what all people need for a fulfilling life, how would you define ‘wealthy’? Poor?
5. To what extent is ‘wealth’ dependent on having money?

### Concept Set 2: Quality vs. quantity, “more” vs. “better”

1. What is the relationship between the quantity of goods we have and our quality of life?
2. Is it possible to have a better life with fewer goods? What about a lower quality of life with more goods?
3. Give an example of when less “stuff” can make life better.
4. Give an example of when more “stuff” is better.

### Concept Set 3: Price, cost, value

1. Fold a piece of paper in half lengthwise. On one side list three things you greatly value. On the other side list three things that are expensive (that you have or would like). Are there any overlaps on the lists? (You can also do this activity using a Venn diagram.)
2. Do you receive fulfillment from your material possessions in relation to the amount of time and money you spend to get them?
3. Give an example of an item, activity, or experience that cost little or nothing, but brought you great happiness or satisfaction.

## REFERENCES

- Ben-Shahar, T. (2007). *Happier: learn the secrets to daily joy and lasting fulfillment*. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill.
- Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth*. Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.