



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Beyond Health and Happiness Lies Human Flourishing

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today, we look at what it means to flourish and a new study that aims to measure and expand our understanding of individual and collective well-being.***

What does it mean to live well? Is there more to being healthy and happy than merely not suffering from disease, family dysfunction, and mental illness.

At Harvard University’s Institute for Quantitative Social Science, they describe optimum well-being as flourishing, a state in which every facet of a person’s life is good. In fact, Harvard has a Human Flourishing Program, devoted to studying and promoting the concept of flourishing through the lenses of public health, medicine, social sciences, philosophy, psychology and theology. The program measures flourishing based on five central domains, each of which is desired almost universally and worth pursuing for its own end:

- Happiness and life satisfaction
- Mental and physical health
- Meaning and purpose
- Character and virtue
- Close social relationships

The Human Flourishing Program is using the types of public health tools and methodologies created for medical outcomes to study the concept of flourishing.

“I sometimes find it remarkable that we know so much more, for example, about the determinants of cardiovascular disease than we do about the determinants of what gives rise to a sense of purpose in life, despite that being a desired end for almost everyone,” said Tyler

VanderWeele, the John L. Loeb and Frances Lehman Loeb Professor of Epidemiology and director of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard.

Researchers from the Human Flourishing Program, along with partners Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion, Gallup and Center for Open Science, are launching the largest study of its kind to investigate the factors that determine flourishing. The \$43.4 million Global Flourishing Study will last five years and involve 240,000 individuals representing 22 countries, including the United States.

It is hoped the Global Flourishing Study will lead to answers for what individuals and societies can do to become their best.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Researchers in the Global Flourishing Study have put together a [flourishing index assessment](#) that contains questions and statements representing the five domains of human flourishing plus financial and material stability.

How would you rate each question on a scale of 0-10?

Happiness and Life Satisfaction

- Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?
0=Not Satisfied at All, 10=Completely Satisfied
- In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?
0=Extremely Unhappy, 10=Extremely Happy

Mental and Physical Health

- In general, how would you rate your physical health?
0=Poor, 10=Excellent
- How would you rate your overall mental health?
0=Poor, 10=Excellent

Meaning and Purpose

- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?
0=Not at All Worthwhile, 10=Completely Worthwhile
- I understand my purpose in life.
0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree

Character and Virtue

- I always act to promote good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations.
0=Not True of Me, 10=Completely True of Me
- I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later.
0=Not True of Me, 10=Completely True of Me

Close Social Relationships

- I am content with my friendships and relationships.
0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree
- My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be.
0=Strongly Disagree, 10=Strongly Agree

Financial and Material Stability

- How often do you worry about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses?
0=Worry All of the Time, 10=Do Not Ever Worry
- How often do you worry about safety, food, or housing?
0=Worry All of the Time, 10=Do Not Ever Worry

Scoring: Your score within each of the domains is the average of your responses to the two questions in a domain. Your overall score is the average of your responses to all the questions in the 6 domains (sum of your responses divided by 6). The higher your score, the more you are flourishing. The national average was about 70 before the pandemic and 65 in June 2020.

VanderWeele, T.J. (2017). [On the promotion of human flourishing](#). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, U.S.A.*, 31, 8148-8156.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the **Be Brain Healthy** movement, **because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference**. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).