

Innovative routes to wellbeing: Ideas around embodiment

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Wellbeing?

Definitions seem to be dependent on your discipline...

Physical, social, psychological, spiritual are common elements of wellbeing definitions.

Dwelling and mobility, an existential approach to wellbeing (Todres & Galvin 2014)

Hedonic and eudaimonic approaches to wellbeing with hedonic associated with pleasure and eudaimonic associated with engagement with others (McMahan & Estes 2011 and Hartwell et al., 2012)

Embodiment?

Definitions seem to be dependent on your discipline....

The body and experiences of embodiment are layered, nuanced, complex and multifaceted, at the level of human subjective experience, interaction, social organisation, institutional arrangements, cultural processes, society and history.

Waskul & Vannini *The Body in Symbolic Interaction*, in, 2006 *Body/Embodiment*, Burlington: USA.

Public Health ideas about embodiment...

“Embodiment in public health and epidemiology is the means by which humans biologically incorporate the physical and social environment in which they live throughout their life course, an underpinning assumption of the term embodiment is that one’s biology cannot be understood without considering psychosocial and sociocultural aspects of individual development and societies history”.

(Krieger 2001, Hemingway 2012)

Public Health – Ideas about embodiment....

- Discrimination is an example of embodiment whereby the adverse effects get `under the persons skin` and cause poor health.
- Embodiment pertains to how we experience the world...its limits or possibilities.
- Does embodiment describe the process whereby our experiences of life `impact` on us or `interact with us` as human beings....?

How to be well...where the public health evidence lies...

Gordon 2010

- Don't be poor, if you can stop if you can't don't be poor for long.
- Don't live in a deprived area if you do move.
- Don't be disabled or have a disabled child.
- Don't work in a low paid manual stressful job.
- Don't be homeless or live in damp poor quality housing
- Be able to afford to pay for social activities and annual holidays.
- Don't be a lone parent.
- Claim benefits to which you are entitled.
- Be able to afford your own car.


Embodiment and behaviour?

Currently the ideas around influencing health behaviour focus on cognitive interventions to change behaviours, such as:



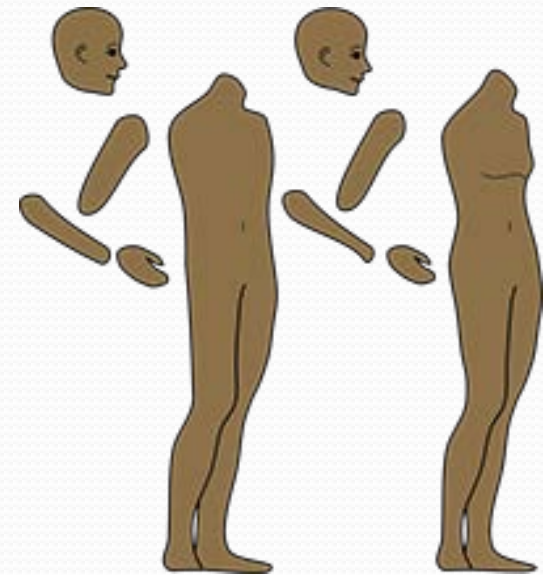


Are they primarily
sensory embodied
experiences and habits?



We know our minds change our bodies, if we are worried or anxious in the long term this has a negative impact on our bodies (e.g., coronary heart disease) in the short term we get symptoms, sweating, fidgeting, freezing, headaches, muscle tension etc.

But do our bodies change our minds....does the way we behave in our bodies influence how we think and feel about ourselves and others and maybe even impact on how we behave.....



Current/future funded research projects...

- Staying Active and Independent for Longer SAIL (EU Commission) includes projects looking at access to nature and animal assisted interventions.
- Parkinson`s Dance Project (Big Lottery Funded) focused on evaluation of a dance based intervention.
- INNOVATEDIGNITY (EU Commission) includes projects focused on promoting wellbeing and helping older people to remain active and healthy.

The Horse Course

- <http://www.thehorsecourse.org/>

Embodiment, wellbeing and health behaviour change.....

- Do we need to experience the `natural` world through our bodies to be well?
- Does feeling positive about ourselves, feeling `well` mean we are more likely to be able to maintain behaviour change?
- Can body posture/movement impact on how we feel about ourselves and how we behave?
- Do we need to replace one embodied behaviour with another to change behaviour (e-cigarettes)?
- If our embodied experience impacts on how we behave....can this influence wellbeing and health behaviour?

Emerging Evidence....

- Exercise and Depression, Anxiety (Eng et al., 2014)
- Being in the natural environment and Mental Health Issues (Beyer et al., 2014, Mind 2017)
- Horses and changes in offending behaviour, reductions in anxiety and increases in social competence and engagement with education in young people (Hemingway et al., 2015, 2018 Pendry et al., 2014)
- Singing and improvements in chronic illness (Skingley et al., 2014)
- Dancing and living with Parkinson`s disease (Norton, Hemingway, Ellis Hill 2018 Conf Paper)

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