

A GUIDE TO:

# PERMA: Fostering a Well-being Classroom



In 2011, Martin Seligman introduced the PERMA model to help explore, define, and practice well-being in various environments. Students bring all of their life's experiences with them into the classroom, which can lead to distraction and disengagement. Using well-being practices in the classroom can provide all students an opportunity to build their resilience, learn to thrive, and manage challenging circumstances. Most importantly, these practices aim to improve students' psychological and physical well-being over time, which enables them to make better informed decisions that align with their values and interests (Seligman, 2018). To help you foster well-being in the classroom, consider the five elements of PERMA and evidence-based teaching strategies to support each element.

## Positive Emotions.

Focusing on positive emotions is one way you can help your students build the skills they need in order to flourish, improve resiliency and build social resources (Fredrickson, 2013; Hart, 2021). You can support your students by:

- modeling how to give positive [peer-to-peer feedback](#)
- encouraging students to keep a [gratitude journal](#),
- asking students to reflect on what went well in the class session and teaching [positive self-talk](#).

Here are some [additional best practices](#) on how to encourage hope, interest, awe, and amusement in the classroom.

## Engagement.

Engagement helps build strengths, and self-esteem (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Ivtzan et al., 2016). Engage your students by implementing [active learning activities](#), [encouraging their voice](#), and providing weekly reflection prompts to help them identify their strengths. For example:

"A strength that I used this week was \_\_\_, A strength that I discovered this week was \_\_\_. A strength I am developing is \_\_\_."

## P-E-R-M-A

---

P- POSITIVE EMOTIONS

---

E- ENGAGEMENT

---

R- RELATIONSHIP

---

M- MEANING

---

A- ACCOMPLISHMENT



## Relationship.

Relationships are critical to an individual's ability to connect and learn (Falecki, 2016). Features of positive relationships include open communication, respect and trust, sense of belonging, and mutual support (Seligman, 2011). You can support positive relationships in the classroom by modeling positive relationships, having students [establish ground rules](#), and embedding [collaborative learning](#) as well as icebreakers to build rapport.

## Meaning.

A sense of meaning or purpose can be derived from the feeling of belonging or connecting to something bigger than oneself (Falecki, 2016; Seligman, 2011). You can bring meaning to the classroom by using reflective activities that connect to student's strength and interests (e.g., [reflective journaling](#), [concept mapping](#), [ePortfolios](#)) and making classroom content relevant to students' interests.



## Accomplishment.

A sense of accomplishment is the result of working toward and reaching desired goals, which often requires motivation and perseverance (Seligman, 2011). You can help students achieve a sense of accomplishment by setting clear [student learning outcomes](#), giving them an opportunity to set their own [SMART goals](#), and celebrating their achievements as a way to increase positive affect, create a growth mindset, and build resilience.

## References

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2009). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. HarperCollins.

Falecki, D. (2016, August 5). The science of PERMA & classroom strategies. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/science-perma-classroom-strategies-daniela-falecki/>

Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Positive emotions broaden and build. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 1-54). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00001-2>

Hart, R. (2021). *Positive psychology: The basics*. Routledge.

Ivtzan, I., Lomas, T., Hefferon, K., & Worth P. (2016). *Second wave positive psychology: Embracing the dark side of life*. Routledge

Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Free Press

Seligman, M. (2018). PERMA and the building blocks of well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(4), 333-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1437466>