

The importance of pleasure, engagement and meaning for mental health

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Defining mental health (well-being)

■ Subjective well-being (hedonic)

- Satisfaction with life (SWL)
- Positive Affect (PA)
- Negative Affect (NA)



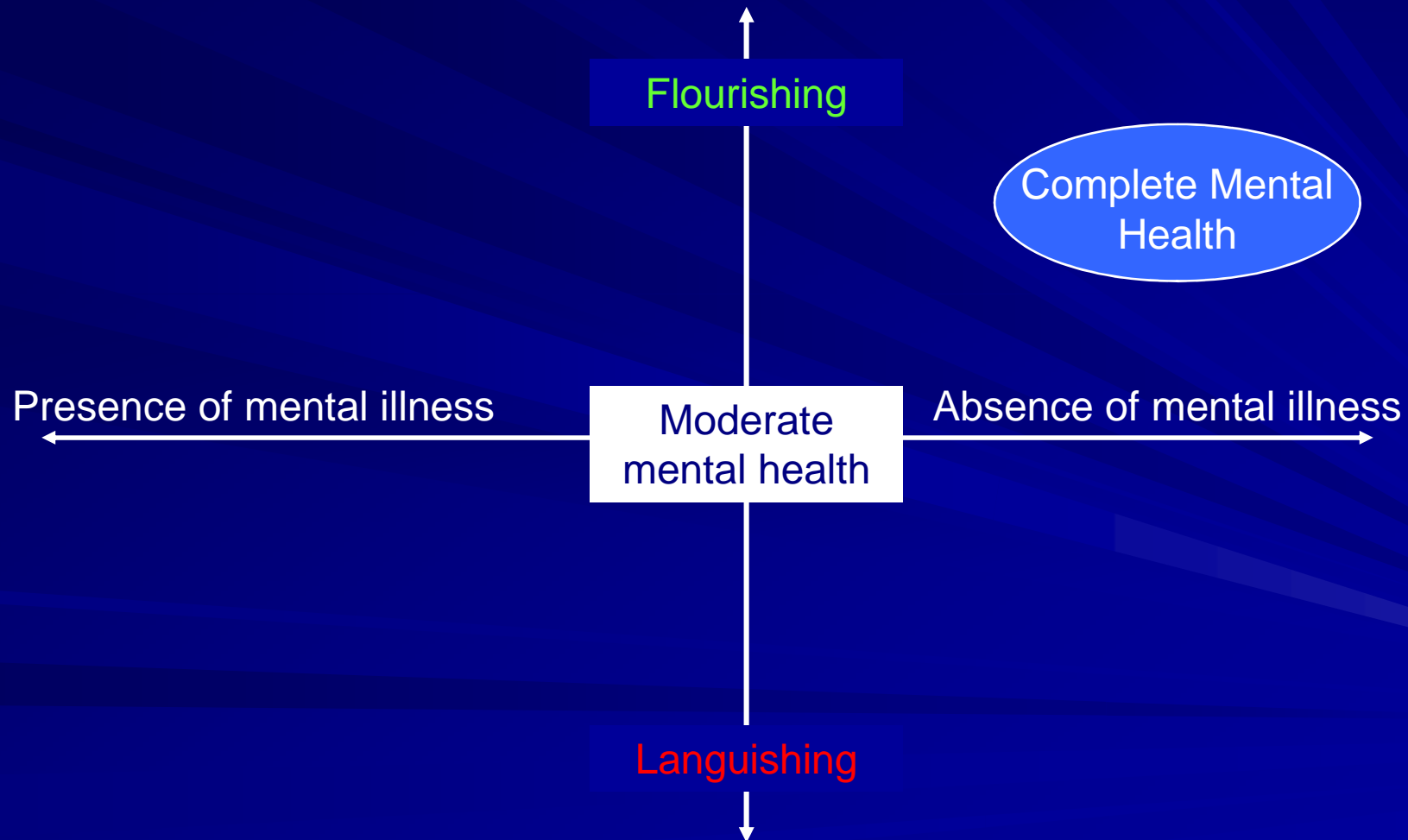
■ Psychological well-being (eudaimonia)

- Involves being true to one self
- Focuses on life purpose and growth



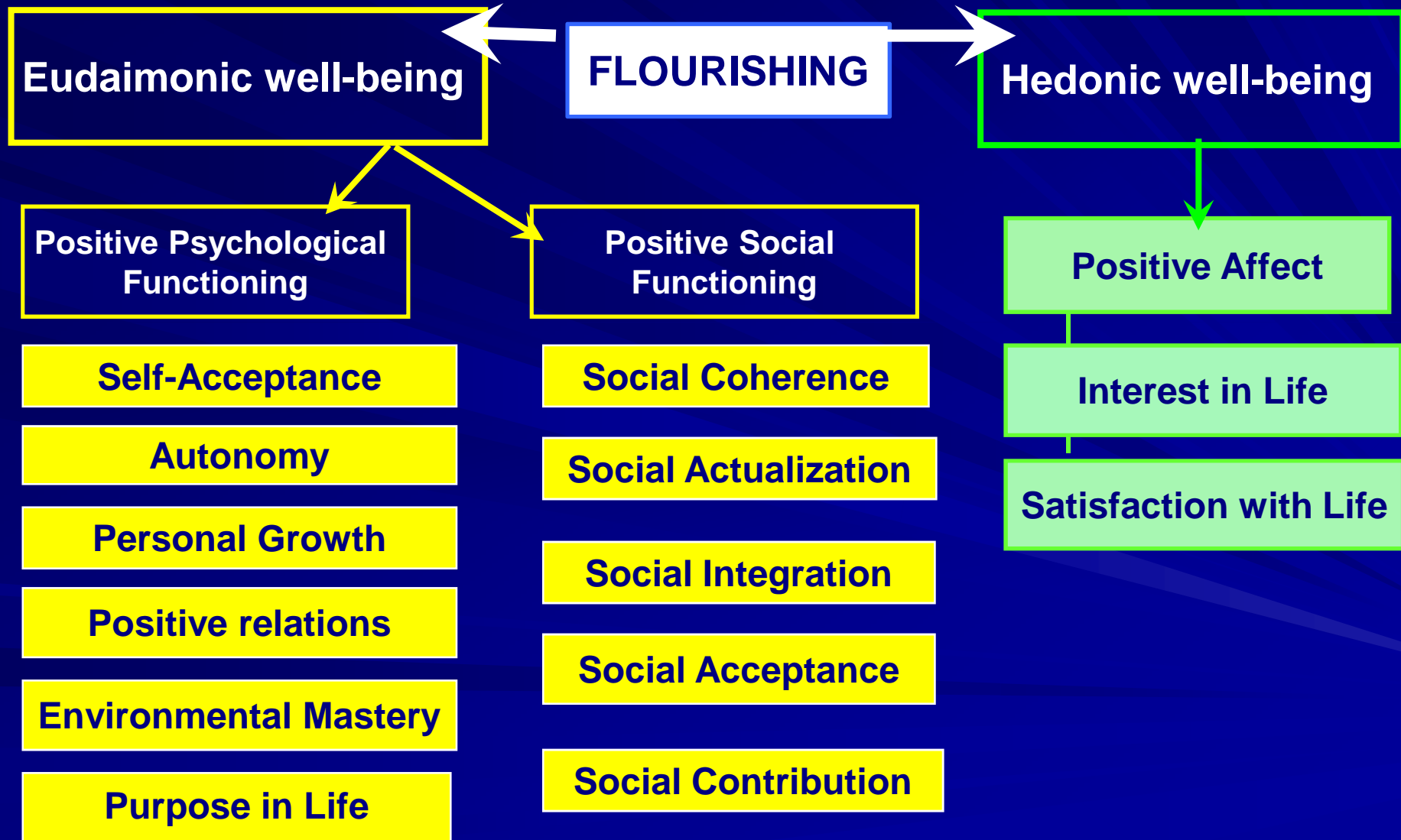
Mental Health Continuum

Complete State Model of Mental Health (Keyes, 2005)



Mental Health Continuum Model

Keyes, 2005



The complete state model

(Keyes & Grzywacz, 2002, 2005)

Complete health (19%)

Absence of physical and mental morbidity

Presence of physical and mental well-being

Incomplete health (62%)

Good physical health but presence of mental morbidity (10%) OR

Poor physical health but good mental well-being (52%)

Completely unhealthy (19%)

High physical and mental morbidity AND low physical and mental well-being

What Positive Psychology is NOT.

Positive Psychology:

- is not about trying to maintain positive emotions all the time.
- does not deny the importance of negative emotions and experiences.
- is not intended to replace traditional approaches to mental health.

Positive Psychology

- focuses on optimal functioning and ‘flourishing’ **for everyone**.
- is about making the most of life experiences to develop and grow.
- concerns itself with understanding the full life - which includes hedonic and eudaimonic aspects
- is scientifically grounded.



WHODUNNIT?

Positive experiences among the terminally ill

- From a checklist with 12 positive and 22 negative mood adjectives, 96 cancer patients with a survival prognosis of less than 3 months endorsed 30% of the positive items and 25% of negative ones. Van der Lee et al. (2006)
- Another study of 59 cancer patients found that positive affect did not change significantly even as death was approaching and scores on the PANAS positive scale were higher than the PANAS negative scale. Rabkin et al., (2009).

Orientations to happiness

- Pleasure
- Engagement
- Meaning



Those leading the full life report higher SWL than those leading the empty life. Engagement and Meaning are especially important for W-B. (Peterson et al, 2006; Vella-Brodrick et al, 2009).

Engagement and Meaning

Life engagement (participation and immersion):

- Happiness at work (Bonebright et al., 2000)
- Cognitive, mental and physical health (Parslow et al., 2006)

Meaning (life purpose, beyond the self):

- Psychopathology (Schulenberg, 2004)
- Well-being (Zika & Chamberlain, 1992)
- Physiological health (Ryff & colleagues)

Meaning was a significant predictor of HRQoL for colorectal cancer patients (Salsman et al. 2011)

Pleasure

- Positive emotions lead to desirable outcomes.
 - Broaden and Build Theory (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001).
 - foster approach behaviour
 - build resources and resilience
 - undo the physiological effects of negative experiences
 - High positive emotions are associated with, and lead to, success with work, relationships and health (meta analysis by Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

Some positive approaches to life

- Noting and extending positive experiences.
- Living in the moment.
- Expressing gratitude to others.
- Recognising and using personal strengths.
- Regularly undertaking pleasurable, engaging and meaningful activities.



Good news for enhancing *Quality of Life!*

- Many well-being interventions:
 - can be incorporated into traditional treatments
 - are generally simple
 - can be self-guided
 - have general appeal
 - are easy to tailor to specific needs.



Dragons Abreast Australia



- *Probably to other people I look normal...you shouldn't assume because people are upright and breathing that they're normal and everything's fine. So I think it's made me even more sympathetic to other people.* (Horgan et al., 2011, p. 1120).