

# APPLIED LIFE WELLBEING TOOLS

## INTRODUCTION

You are the person who knows best how you can be happy. Then why aren't we always happy?

First, we may not understand how challenges or difficult emotions fall into our understanding of happiness. We don't know how to integrate them into our overall well-being.

Second, we are creatures of habit. Maybe our daily routine lacks certain habits that would serve our well-being or includes habits that inhibit well-being. Or we simply aren't aware of what would make us happier because we haven't got into the habit of checking in with ourselves on a regular basis.

And third, there might be something in the way between us and what we know would make us happy. We might put someone else's need before ours, not recognizing that there might be a strategy that would include our own happiness while we're taking care of others. Or we think something else needs to be dealt with first before we allow ourselves to be happy.

## WE WOULD LOVE TO SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR JOURNEY TO HAPPINESS BY

1. Giving you opportunities to explore your resources, practice introspection, and gain self-awareness about what happiness means to you
2. Teaching you strategies how to develop a sustainable practice of mindfulness and well-being
3. Providing fun and playful tools and activities that help you build individualized routines to support your well-being practically and effectively

If you'd like to learn more, please contact us at [team@appliedlife.is](mailto:team@appliedlife.is)

\*These tools are meant to increase your well-being when you are in general in good mental health. They do not substitute professional help if you feel symptoms or indications for mental illness. If you feel burned out or in any other way emotionally or mentally or overwhelmed or unable to cope with your current situation, please do seek professional help! There are support groups, special helplines, community centers, pastoral care, and counseling service points that you can contact as a first step.



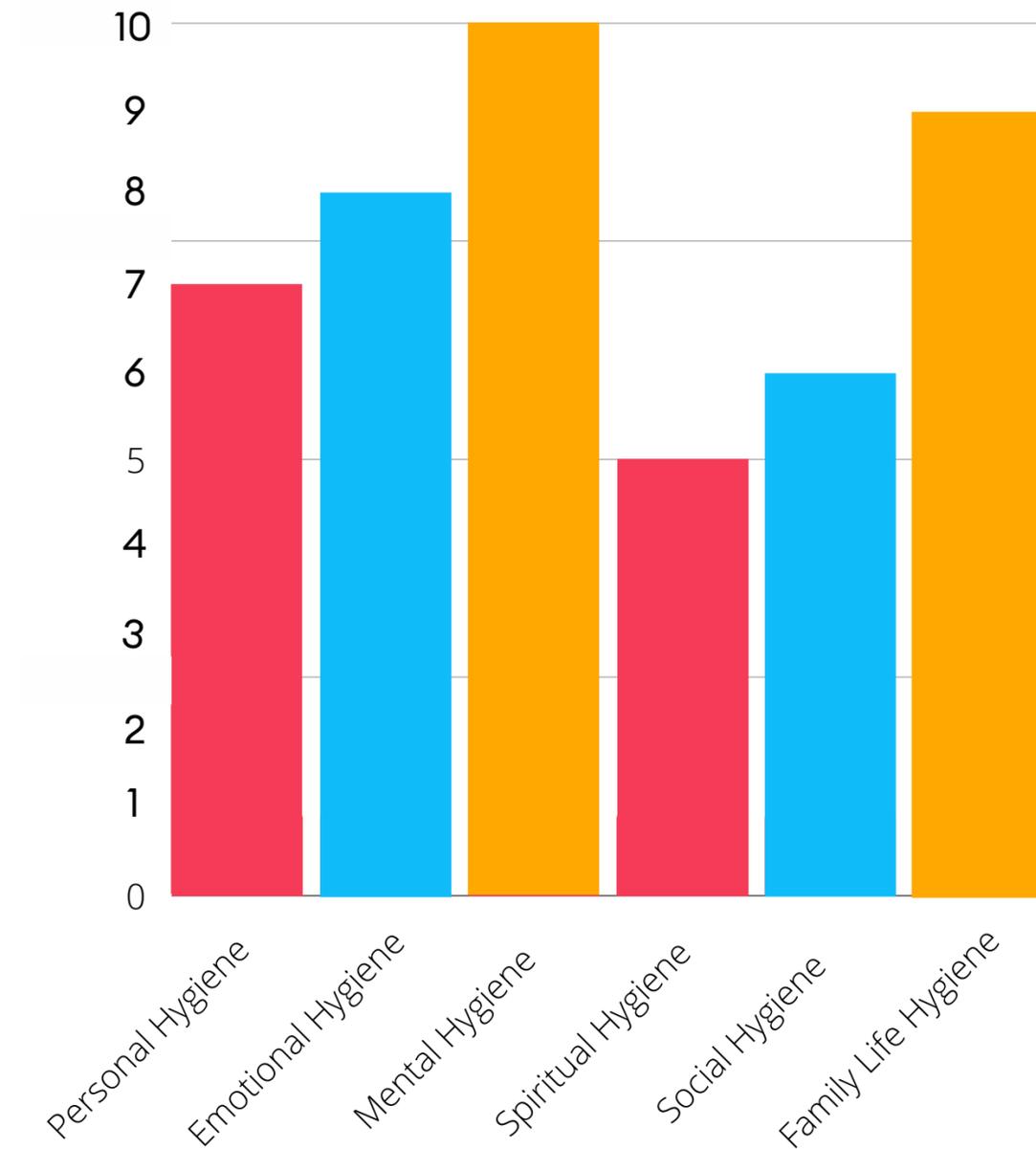
# INTRODUCTION TO PHI AND RICE BOWL

The Personal Hygiene Inventory (PHI) is a model-independent activity that helps you explore your individual needs and find ways to improve your overall well-being. It allows you to think about the things that are important to you specifically and build them into your daily routine again. You can share your insights with your partner or even do this activity together and support one another. PHI is especially useful when you're trying to build good habits and practices around your well-being again.

The Rice Bowl is a model-independent activity that helps you find ways to take good care of yourself in challenging times. Sometimes we cannot think about thriving because we're just trying to survive emotionally, until things get better. Maybe a family member is going through a rough time, and we want to support them, maybe the external situation is challenging (ongoing pandemic, conflict at work), or we are dealing with personal issues. It is completely understandable that we can't sit down and take an inventory of all the things that would make us happy when there are so many demands on us already to simply navigate through the challenging situation. In this case, until the crisis has passed, the Rice Bowl can give us comfort and strengthen our resilience.

# PHI: PERSON HYGIENE INVENTORY

- 1) Identify your personal hygiene tanks, i.e. the high-level categories where you can apply self-care to boost your wellbeing.
- 2) Think about when you are at your best. For each category determine where you need to be on a scale from 1-10 in order to be positively thriving
- 3) Brainstorm and list all the actions, resources and good habits that fill up each tank. (For example 'physical hygiene: sleep 8 hours, have breakfast before 9am, do 30 min. of yoga, take a bubble bath, get a massage –be specific to your own needs)
- 4) Take inventory by saying where you are on each scale right now (e.g. 4/8 in physical hygiene, 5/9 in emotional hygiene etc.)
- 5) Review from your list what measures you can take to fill up your hygiene tank whenever it is lower than you prefer it to be.



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# RICE BOWL

I developed the Rice Bowl activity when I was going through a difficult time. My mother-in-law had been ill for quite some time, and we knew we didn't have much time left with her. We were still in the middle of the Covid pandemic and had traveled back and forth between two countries so that my husband could spend time with her.

Our curious and outgoing toddler, who thrives on a good routine, suffered from the constant changes and the times of isolation due to Covid. I tried to support both my husband and my daughter to the best of my abilities. While I was working during the day, I made sure I created a dependable routine for my daughter with quality time in the morning and evening and enjoyable afternoon activities together. I tried to have my husband's back by managing the household, arranging flights and travels, taking care of our other duties and responsibilities, and providing support while emotions were raw on both sides.



Even though I knew that I hardly did anything from my Personal Hygiene Inventory (PHI) and was already pushing myself despite physical and mental exhaustion, I needed to make things work for my husband and my daughter. It was unthinkable to go to a spa or go to dance lessons for recreation. There wasn't even enough time or energy left to do yoga in the morning. Conscious of the overall stress, I noticed that on some days, I still felt good enough to say to people: "Thank you for asking, I'm really OK."

What was it that made me not just say, but really feel OK? I believe that three things played a key role.



Focusing on what I can do instead of what I can't do



Knowing that even little things matter and can make a difference



Finding the things that contribute significantly to my well-being

I noticed that despite not being able to exercise and not having much time for myself at all, a few things really made my day. For example, enjoying an Asian breakfast with rice, vegetable soup, and tofu made me incredibly happy, and it didn't take much time for me to make it. Speaking with a close friend on the phone for just five minutes. Making sure I went outside even if I combined it with going to the post office or going grocery shopping. Reading a book for ten minutes after putting my daughter to sleep.

I call it the Rice Bowl activity for two reasons. Firstly because of the experience of how ridiculously happy an Asian breakfast made me on a challenging day. And second because of a story that I heard from the late Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh of how sometimes in certain regions in Asia people would substitute "have you had rice yet?" as a question for "how are you doing?". Sometimes, there is scarcity, and it's no use to deny it. But it doesn't mean our life can't be good. If we have the tools to take care of our well-being in challenging times, we can still cultivate a mindset of mental health where ultimately, despite the less favorable circumstances, we still have enough resources to look out for others as well.



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# INSTRUCTIONS RICE BOWL ACTIVITY

Write down a handful of things that you can do in your circumstances that significantly increase your well-being. They can bring you joy or serenity or help you unwind. Don't overthink it.

More often these will be things that...



... energize you instead of requiring additional effort



... that you don't need to plan in but can simply do when you find the time



... don't take much time but can be scalable to the amount of time that you have



... meet some of your basic physical and emotional needs

If you are still unsure, you experiment with different things or talk to a friend and reflect.

Check in with yourself on a regular basis. Even if it's just a little thing you can do for yourself, try to actively do those acts of self-kindness. You will notice that it does make a difference.

When the challenging situation has passed, do take the time to give your well-being greater attention then.



Write down your 'rice bowl ingredients' here:

Handwriting area consisting of seven horizontal red bars with white borders, intended for writing down 'rice bowl ingredients'.



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