

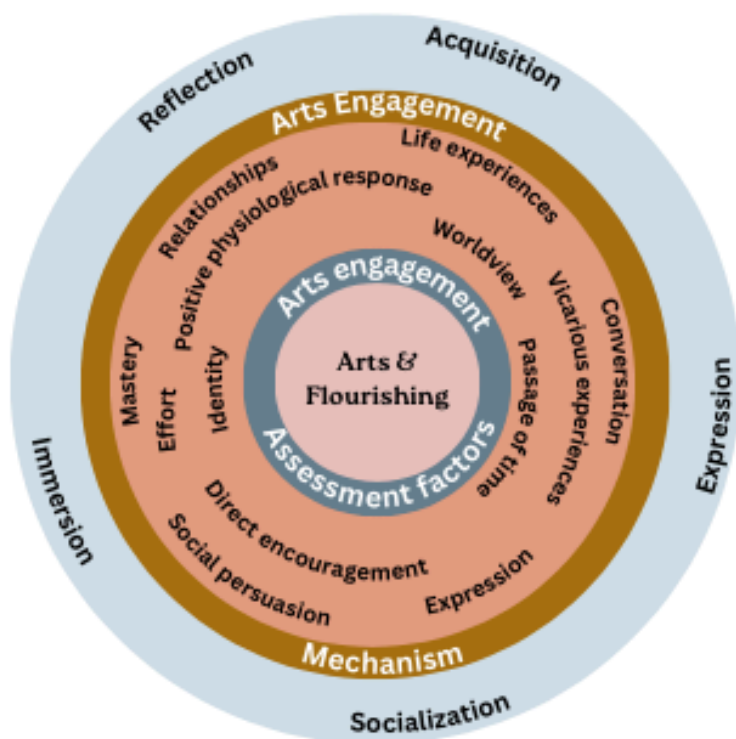
ARTS & FLOURISHING

OVERVIEW

Flourishing is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity).¹ Human flourishing involves both high well-being and low ill-being. Fostering well-being means promoting and preserving factors such as positive emotions, strengths, hope, meaning, purpose, and healthy relationships; working against ill-being means mitigating and preventing diseases, disorders, traumatic experiences, and other negative states and traits.^{2,3}

The Positive Humanities seek to understand the relationship between engagement with arts and culture and various flourishing outcomes. The Positive Humanities integrate perspectives from the arts and humanities with methods of scientific investigation used in psychology and other social sciences to advance a balanced and comprehensive approach to human flourishing.²

The figure below identifies the assessment factors of arts engagement as well as arts engagement mechanisms.³



BROADER SIGNIFICANCE & IMPACT

Positive outcomes of engagement with the arts include sense-making, aesthetic appreciation, entertainment, and bonding.⁴

Benefits of art engagement include reduced risk for mental health conditions, decreased loneliness, decreased negative affect, and lower mortality risks, as well as greater subjective health, increased positive affect, higher levels of relaxation, and a greater sense of community and belonging.⁴

Social prescribing (prescribing attendance at cultural events) connects individuals to resources within their community that can alleviate existing health conditions and foster engagement in positive health behaviors.

In the UK, the “Arts on Prescription” program was associated with a 37% decrease in doctor visits and a 27% reduction in hospital admissions.⁶

Arts engagement promotes positive emotions, creativity, performance, cognitive enhancement and a sense of identity in older people.

In an older population, well-being-focused art museum programs increase feelings of social engagement, enhance positive emotions, and raise levels of overall well-being. In people with dementia, art-making and art discussion programs reduce social isolation and depression as well as boost self-confidence, engagement, emotional well-being, and quality of life.⁶

Participation in the arts and humanities may uniquely contribute to our character strengths.

Holocaust and Humanity Museum employs the arts' ability to increase our appreciation of excellence to promote positive behaviors and strengths. Arts and humanities can also build emotion regulation skills, including the affirmation of values, effective use of language, emotional awareness, adjustment of emotion regulation strategies, and perspective-taking.⁵

Visiting art museums and engaging in museum programming is linked to more positive emotions and is viewed as a rewarding experience.⁵

Immediate emotional responses to artwork activate brain areas involved in emotion regulation, pleasure, and reward.⁷ Visiting art museums is associated with lower stress, lower levels of anxiety and depression, lower risk of dementia, higher well-being, higher quality of life, and better health.⁶

Art museums can help build connected communities, providing visitors with a sense of connection and feelings of inclusion.

Art museums can improve well-being by promoting positive emotions, engagement in life and activities, positive relationships, positive traits and character strengths, transformative experiences, meaning and purpose in life, financial and material stability, autonomy, and sense of achievement.⁶

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