Well-Being: Expanding the Definition of Progress

Insights From Practitioners, Researchers, and Innovators From Around the Globe

RWJF Culture of Health Series, published with Oxford University Press
Anticipated publication date: Summer 2020
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SUMMARY

Cities and countries around the world—from New Zealand to Singapore, and Santa Monica to Iceland—are starting to take a well-being approach. They are reorienting policies, budgets, narratives, and other actions with the goal of advancing human and planetary well-being in addition to economic growth.

This new book explores these experiences, as well as the potential to expand this approach, through scientific papers, case studies from the field, and excerpts from a lively, multidisciplinary discussion with leaders from 19 countries reflecting diverse perspectives. Rich with insights on policy and practice; narratives and culture; equity and shifts in power; alignment with other movements; and cross-sector collaboration—the book is intended to inspire practitioners; governmental leaders; policymakers; economists; measurement scientists; reporters; and others who seek a more integrated and balanced pursuit of progress.
EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS

“Alonzo Plough has carefully curated insights that illuminate the centrality of communities, social systems, and social determinants; and make explicit the connection between race, residential segregation, and health outcomes in the United States.”

Angela Glover Blackwell, JD
Founder in Residence, PolicyLink

“A compelling analysis of why a focus on well-being is optimal for the human condition—with health equity at the center—and how to achieve it through community-based policymaking.”

Arachu Castro, PhD, MPH
Samuel Z. Stone Chair of Public Health in Latin America and Director of the Collaborative Group for Health Equity in Latin America, Tulane University

“It is imperative that we go beyond traditional national measures like GDP and be more inclusive of cities in our global operating models if we wish to respond to systemic stressors and inevitable shocks. Considering the health and well-being of individuals provides a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient framework for global and local problem-solving. An important read for policymakers and practitioners alike.”

Grant Ervin, MPIA
Chief Resilience Officer of the City of Pittsburgh

“The fundamental culture shift in business catalyzed by the B Corp movement reflects the same change in our definition of progress that is desperately needed across all sectors. This book makes a compelling case for using well-being as our collective North Star by combining visionary ideas with practical examples for putting these ideas in action.”

Jay Coen Gilbert
Co-founder, B Lab, the nonprofit behind the B Corp movement

“Powerful and practical, this reflective collection of futuristic essays paints a fascinating universe of considerations for defining the very soul of health and well-being.”

Howard K. Koh, MD, MPH
Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard Kennedy School

“A wonderful and easy read that stimulates both the mind and the spirit, Well-Being: Expanding the Definition of Progress offers a refreshing and much-needed perspective on the meaning of well-being that is at once rooted in the discourse and worldview of various Indigenous communities and in other modern framings around equity, justice, and resilience.”

Somava Saha, MD, MS
Executive Lead, Well Being in the Nation (WIN) Network; Founder and Executive Lead, Well-being and Equity (WE) in the World
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Alonzo L. Plough, PhD, MPH, MA, Chief Science Officer and Vice President, Research-Evaluation-Learning, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Section I: Why Well-Being
The case for centering decision-making, resource allocation, and cultural expectations on well-being.

■ Chapter 1—Well-Being as a Pathway to Equity
Walter Flores, PhD, Executive Director, Center for the Study of Equity and Governance in Health Systems
Dr. Éloi Laurent, Senior Economist, Sciences Po Centre for Economic Research, France, and Visiting Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering, Stanford University
Jennifer Prah Ruger, PhD, MSc, MSL, MA, Amartya Sen Professor of Health Equity, Economics, and Policy, School of Social Policy & Practice and Professor, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania

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Carol Graham, AB, MA, DPhil, Leo Pasvolsky Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution, and College Park Professor, The University of Maryland

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Felicity Thomas, PhD, Senior Research Fellow, University of Exeter
Nils Fietje, PhD, Research Officer, Regional Office for Europe, World Health Organization

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Alonzo L. Plough
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