

What the pursuit of well-being means for our brain

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In the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, Gregor Hasler (University of Bern) analyzes the neuroscientific implications of the pursuit of well-being.

Psychiatric neuroscience and academic psychology are driven by a strong 'disease bias'. Accordingly, almost all treatments for prevalent psychiatric and psychosomatic conditions, most attention is dedicated to stress and its consequences. This leads to an involuntary but unavoidable reinforcement of negative aspects of life. However, patients cannot wait for the benefits of neuroscience-informed well-being therapies to arrive in the future.

Promising findings show strong and lasting effects of currently available well-being therapy in severe psychiatric conditions such as [major depressive disorder](#). This work encourages physicians to implement positive health promotion right now into clinical work.

In addition, clinical trials have the potential to compare various types of treatment methods, including interpersonal therapies, mindfulness training, cognitive and metacognitive approaches, [cognitive bias modification](#) and affect-oriented psychotherapies, and to identify markers that predict the individual response to specific interventions.

There is no doubt that current clinical insights and experiences acting in concert with a neurobiological understanding of positive health will provide us with novel and more effective well-being therapy options.

The Author concludes: "I am confident that our meaning, reward and pleasure system is more powerful and plastic than our academic textbooks have ever dared to imagine."

More information: Gregor Hasler. Well-Being: An Important Concept for Psychotherapy and Psychiatric Neuroscience, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* (2016). [DOI: 10.1159/000447268](https://doi.org/10.1159/000447268)

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