Scientific Foundations

Four research perspectives on holistic wellbeing

A companion to OptiMe’s cultural philosophies, drawing on the research references in its knowledge base. Cultural philosophies offer a lens for living; scientific frameworks describe aspects of wellbeing, behaviour and sleep.

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How to read this guide

Each section names the relevant expert, explains the core idea, gives an illustrative everyday application and links to further reading. The examples are educational suggestions, not prescribed treatments.

Attribution, not endorsement. These experts are cited for their published work. Their inclusion does not establish an advisory relationship with, endorsement of, or clinical validation of OptiMe. This is a selected overview, not a complete review of the evidence.

PERMA

Martin Seligman

Positive psychology · University of Pennsylvania

PERMA is a framework describing five elements of wellbeing: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment. It looks beyond feeling good alone and recognises several ways people can flourish.

Positive Emotion. Moments of enjoyment, gratitude or hope.

Engagement. Absorption in an activity that uses your skills.

Relationships. Supportive connections and a sense of belonging.

Meaning. Connection to something you consider worthwhile.

Accomplishment. Progress towards goals or mastery of a skill.

An everyday application

At the end of the week, identify an enjoyable moment, an absorbing activity, a supportive connection, something meaningful and one achievement. Pick one area to nurture with a small action next week.

Important distinction

PERMA is a useful organising framework, not a diagnosis or a substitute for an individual's circumstances. OptiMe's six life areas are not the same as the five PERMA elements.

Sources & further reading

University of Pennsylvania: PERMA theory

Seligman: PERMA and the building blocks of wellbeing

Knowledge-base reference: "The Science Behind OptiMe", research-inspired principles. Supporting sources expand and qualify that summary; no endorsement is implied.

Tiny Habits

BJ Fogg

Behaviour design · Stanford researcher

Tiny Habits makes a desired behaviour small enough to fit everyday life, links it to an existing routine and uses a positive response to reinforce the experience. It complements the Fogg Behavior Model.

Motivation. The desire to carry out a behaviour.

Ability. How easy the behaviour is to do in that moment.

Prompt. A cue that brings the behaviour to mind at the right time.

The Tiny Habits recipe. After an existing routine, do a tiny behaviour, then acknowledge it positively.

An everyday application

“After I brush my teeth, I will stretch gently for a few seconds.” Start with a version that feels easy, and acknowledge that you followed through rather than demanding a large result.

Important distinction

The model says motivation, ability and a prompt converge at the same time. B = MAP is conceptual shorthand, not a numerical multiplication formula. Tiny Habits and the behaviour model are related, but not identical.

Sources & further reading

Fogg Behavior Model: motivation, ability and prompt

Tiny Habits: the method

Knowledge-base reference: “The Science Behind OptiMe”, research-inspired principles. Supporting sources expand and qualify that summary; no endorsement is implied.

Habit formation

Wendy Wood

Social psychology · University of Southern California

Habit research examines how repeated responses become associated with recurring contexts. Over time, a familiar cue can trigger a behaviour with less deliberate decision-making. Wendy Wood's work emphasises the role of context and repetition.

Context cues. A stable place, time or preceding activity can support repetition.

Repeated responses. Practising the same manageable behaviour strengthens the cue–response link.

Automaticity. The behaviour may gradually require less conscious effort.

Supportive surroundings. Reduce friction for the action you want to repeat.

An everyday application

Put comfortable walking shoes near the door and take a short walk after lunch. Use a consistent cue and a manageable routine, adapting it when work or access needs change.

Important distinction

There is no universal "21-day" habit rule. Development varies with the person, behaviour and circumstances. A recorded streak is a record of repetition, not proof that a habit has become automatic.

Sources & further reading

Wood & Rünger (2016): Psychology of Habit

Neal, Wood & Quinn (2006): Habits—A Repeat Performance

Knowledge-base reference: "The Science Behind OptiMe", research-inspired principles. Supporting sources expand and qualify that summary; no endorsement is implied.

Sleep research

Matthew Walker

Sleep science · University of California, Berkeley

Matthew Walker is a sleep researcher and science communicator whose work explores sleep in relation to learning, memory and brain function. Sleep research also examines recovery, alertness and the timing of sleep and wakefulness.

Adequate opportunity. Allow sufficient time for sleep, considering your needs and responsibilities.

Regularity. A consistent sleep and wake schedule can support healthy sleep routines.

Sleep and learning. Research examines how sleep supports memory and cognitive function.

Timing and surroundings. Light exposure, routines and the sleep environment can affect sleep.

An everyday application

Choose a realistic wake-up time, allow enough time for sleep and create a repeatable wind-down routine. Adapt the plan to shift work, caring responsibilities and accessibility needs.

Important distinction

Sleep-duration advice should be attributed to clinical guidance, not to Walker personally: AASM recommends adults regularly obtain at least seven hours. CDC guidance varies by age. Persistent sleep difficulties warrant advice from a qualified professional.

Sources & further reading

UC Berkeley: Matthew Walker researcher profile

AASM: adult sleep-duration advisory

CDC: about sleep and age-based guidance

Knowledge-base reference: “The Science Behind OptiMe”, research-inspired principles. Supporting sources expand and qualify that summary; no endorsement is implied.