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Participant Takeaways on Mentoring for Wellbeing Across Professions, Organizations, and Disciplines

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Mentoring for wellbeing—the topic of this article—matters in today's professions. Interest in wellbeing is growing, calling for blueprints/models that can support the consideration of mentoring as a whole-person endeavor. Whole person mentoring embodies wellbeing, which establishes the rationale for the present work. The purpose of this practical qualitative study was to describe participant takeaways from two presentations delivered at the 2025 Mentoring Conference, University of New Mexico, with connections to mentoring and wellbeing literature. Data sources were (a) researcher reflective note taking and (b) transcription coding and analysis of participant responses. At the two sessions, 114 (of 150) attendees submitted written responses, some of whom orally shared them. Analysis of participant reflections revealed six themes that position mentoring for wellbeing as both conceptual and practical: (1) intentionality in mentoring, (2) developmental mentoring network awareness, (3) equity and accessibility, (4) mentoring practices for flourishing, (5) wellbeing as a pathway for holistic mentoring, and (6) theory translated into experiential action. Together, these findings demonstrated the potential for mentors and mentees to transform theory into lived, relational practices that support flourishing. Bold mentoring visions are likely to yield enlarged, varied, and inclusive networks that extend impact.

Keywords: High Quality Sustainable Mentoring Model for Wellbeing (HQSMM-W) framework, mentoring for wellbeing, PERMA model of wellbeing, SACEW model of mentoring, wellbeing

Introduction

Mentoring for wellbeing from educational models for the professions is the topic of this article. The purpose of this practical qualitative study was to describe participant takeaways from two presentations delivered by the authors at the 2025 Mentoring Conference, University of New Mexico, with connections to mentoring and wellbeing literature. Analysis of participants' reflections revealed themes, which are explained in terms of what they potentially demonstrate in mentoring relationships that support flourishing. This writing contributes to educational knowledge, specifically the emerging idea of mentoring for wellbeing across professions. Relative to practice, the ideas presented emerged from activities undertaken in the conference setting where 114 (of 150) attendees submitted written responses, some orally sharing them.

A generative, powerful construct, mentoring for wellbeing is an outgrowth of mentoring and wellbeing as positive psychology concepts. Drawing on educational practices and theories, such as Seligman's (2002, 2011, 2018) PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment) model of wellbeing, the intersection of mentoring and wellbeing is proposed here. The thinking is that mentoring can significantly improve mentors' and mentees' personal and professional wellbeing. This occurs by fostering positive emotions, improving engagement, building strong relationships, finding meaning in work, and increasing accomplishment, as established in Seligman's body of work. Current studies suggest that wellbeing embedded models of thriving can benefit adults in academic and work settings in ways that assist their development and growth, satisfaction, and emotional resilience (Matthews, 2025; Reames & Mullen, 2025). Wellbeing principles—reflective practice, cognitive empathy, and nonjudgmental dialogue—are foundational to effective mentoring relationships (Morales-Rodríguez, 2025). A review of literature with definitions and models for cultivating growth in adult learning follows. The other sections are methods, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Review of Literature

The knowledge base upon which this article builds includes definitions of mentoring, wellbeing, and mentoring for wellbeing, and the theories of PERMA, SACEW, and HQSMM-W.

Definitions and Models

Key Concepts Defined

To mentoring pioneer Kram, *mentoring* is "a life-altering relationship that inspires mutual growth, learning, and development," the effects of which can be transformative for people, groups, and organizations (Ragins & Kram, 2007, p. 3). A work-based developmental learning relationship, mentoring involves a formal or informal process of learning through relationships in organizational settings (Kram, 1983; Mullen, 2025a, 2025b; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Wheeler et al., 2024). Regarding Kram's (1983) foundational

theory of mentoring, experienced and (relatively) inexperienced individuals ideally experience a productive, fulfilling relationship that provides career and psychosocial support, and offers exposure, sponsorship, protection, visibility, and more. Mutual benefits ideally extend beyond mentoring relationships for programs, organizations, disciplines, and professions.

Wellbeing, as theorized by wellbeing pioneer Seligman (2011) in positive psychology, cultivates "flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment" (p. 12). The five elements are key to feeling good and functioning well and cultivating a life that is more fulfilling and balanced (Seligman, 2018). PERMA stipulates each building block of wellbeing. Research has shown significant positive associations between each of the PERMA components and physical health, vitality, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and commitment within organizations (Kern et al., 2014). Wellbeing domains, as Dahl et al. (2020) postulated, form the ACIP framework: awareness (attention regulation, mindfulness), connection (strong social connections, prosocial orientations), insight (self-understanding), and purpose (finding value/meaning in life).

Mentoring for wellbeing integrates Kram's developmental mentoring theory and Seligman's PERMA model, in the mind of the present authors. In academic and workplace cultures, wellbeing promotes flourishing in ways that cultivate a growth-oriented, healthy approach to professional development and learning (Hobson & Mullen, 2023; Wheeler et al., 2024). Flourishing is a core component of mentoring in adult relationships and salient direction of some recent mentoring research (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Mullen, 2025b; Reames & Mullen, 2025). Wellbeing is about living a balanced life and functioning well by coping with life problems and stressors, learning and working effectively, and participating in community (Keyes, 2016). Beneficiaries of mentoring for wellbeing practice include faculty, students, educators, and employees (Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2024). Wellbeing models (e.g., Seligman, 2011, 2018) and mentoring applications (Adair & Reames, 2025; Mullen, 2025a, 2025b)—research-informed learning processes—encourage educator wellbeing, ideally with lasting benefits. Affirming strategies (mindfulness, appreciation, gratitude, engagement, celebration, etc.) in wellbeing contexts aim to enhance mentoring relationships, interactions, and performance. These are studied to promote their understanding and impact in diverse cultures and contexts, and to enrich knowledge bases (Cherkowski & Walker, 2019; Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2025).

Wellbeing and Mentoring Blueprints

The jointly presented conference sessions were built upon the PERMA model of wellbeing and SACEW model of mentoring in the first presentation, and the HQSMM-W framework in the second presentation. These were approached as foundational to the ideas shared, activities created, and participant responses received. Elsewhere, the authors have published in-depth discussions of these various blueprints (e.g., Adair & Reames, 2025; Mullen, 2025b; Reames & Mullen, 2025). An overview follows of each model, with pertinent citations.

PERMA Model

In 1988, Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, established the study of flourishing and strengths. Seligman's (2002, 2011, 2018) PERMA model shifted focus from treating mental illness to fostering human wellbeing, with ongoing applications in education, workplaces, and various fields (Sutton, 2016). PERMA sheds light on three measures for happiness: a) positive emotions and skills that bring pleasure and gratification in life; (b) engagement or "flow" through which people experience a state of being completely involved in aspects of their life or work and reap benefits (e.g., creativity, growth, connection); and (c) meaning, purpose, and fulfillment through which one's generative capacity and strengths are in service to something greater, such as powerful mentoring in spheres of creativity and innovation.

To guide individuals and organizations toward thriving, Reames and Mullen (2025b) applied Seligman's (2002) PERMA's wellbeing tenets to mentoring. They illustrated the five domains of happiness and fulfillment through interviews with novice principals and mentors who reported using various strategies (mindfulness practices, etc.) for wellbeing and leadership development. PERMA-informed reflective mentoring activities were mapped for learning partnerships.

In essence, PERMA's domains can be described as:

- **Positive emotion ("P")** involves cultivating positive feelings such as joy, gratitude, love, and hope, and accepting negative emotions as a natural part of mentorships.
- **Engagement ("E")** refers to being fully absorbed in activities that challenge the mentor and/or mentee whereby they experience flow or immersion in their relationship and work.
- **Relationships ("R")** highlight the importance of strong, supportive mentoring connections, and value is placed on nurturing positive mentoring relationships as a key component of flourishing lives and professions.
- **Meaning ("M")** involves a sense of purpose and belonging to something greater than the self, as well as reflection on personal values and aligning actions with them.
- **Accomplishment ("A")** refers to the achievement of goals in mentoring relationships and programs through which learning targets are met and a sense of competence is built.

Seligman's positive psychological interventions focused on enhancing individual happiness (Seligman et al., 2005). One such exercise was the Gratitude Visit, initially a classroom assign-

ment intended to promote resilience and positive thoughts. Letters by students, educators, and others thanked people who had impacted their life, a heartfelt testimonial shared with influential mentors. Seligman's exercises, which differ from the authors', are available in various sources (e.g., Seligman et al., 2005). Matthews (2025) described this gratitude exercise as a mindfulness practice that nurtures subjective wellbeing, associating all such practices with improved mental and physical health, as well as "future possibilities."

SACEW Model

Like PERMA, the SACEW model (Mullen, 2025b) proposes a powerful structure for re-imagining learning relationships and organizations. The authors' adapted version of Seligman's (2002) model (Reames & Mullen, 2025) relates to adult mentoring, offering a new way of seeing and appreciating the principles that underlie PERMA. SACEW offers originality through the mentoring lens of support-accessibility-collaboration-equity-wellbeing. Not only does it underscore wellbeing's importance in the overall equation of healthy mentoring, but it also proposes that a wellbeing-centric view of mentoring is warranted, especially in a fast-paced world of high-pressure jobs, stressful lives, and divisive politics.

Briefly, SACEW's five domains/pillars/principles (Mullen, 2025b) are as follows.

- **Support ("S")** denotes a quality mentoring practice that propels mentees' adaptation and learning through multifaceted opportunities (e.g., quality cohorts) and high-leverage activities (e.g., instructional or research strategies) that nurture development and competency.

- **Accessibility ("A")** involves mentor availability, services, resources, and opportunities, and mentors make themselves available to mentees and are honest and transparent to build trust.

- **Collaboration ("C")** brings mentors and mentees together to work on goals, targets, and projects through which learning and effectiveness progress with intentionality, commitment, engagement, and output.

- **Equity ("E")** involves the intentional creation of fair and inclusive learning conditions that foster educational experiences, a just distribution of resources, and cultural recognition and valuing people in light of policies and professional standards for just treatment and closing disparities.

- **Wellbeing ("W")** is quintessentially connected to support, accessibility, collaboration, and equity within the scope of mentorship. Mentors and mentees ask to what extent their mentoring relationship, process, or program is cultivating wellbeing and reaping benefits. For example, through an equity lens wellbeing calls upon mentoring parties and structures to (a) ensure that participants, regardless of their background or identity, receive fair and appropriate support; (b) account for any disparities and addressing them; and (c) create an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

HQSMM - W Framework

When mentoring is approached from a whole person standpoint, it functions as a learning partnership in which mentors and mentees identify shared values and goals. Learning partnerships and social connectedness form the outer rim of the High Quality Sustainable Mentoring Model for Wellbeing (HQSMM-W) framework (Adair & Reames, 2025). Learning partnerships facilitate collaboration between participants through intentional connections. Both mentor and mentee engage in beneficial and reciprocal development, commonly known as psychosocial and career functions (Kram, 1985). These mentoring relationships are sustained through shared experiences, mutual respect, and shared inquiry (Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Mullen, 2000). Mentoring as learning partnership, supported with social connectedness, embraces these intersecting domains: personal and professional development and mentoring processes and structures. At the center of this model lies wellbeing, interpreted through the PERMA lens, which integrates positive emotion and the other elements (Seligman, 2011, 2018).

PERMA, SACEW, or HQSMM-W can be used as self-assessment tools to identify areas of work or life for nurturement. To encourage wellbeing through mentoring, engagement activities are thoughtfully implemented (a summary follows). Such reflective opportunities with participants can propel meaningful conversation and engagement, growth and achievement.

Methods

Setting, Participants, and Materials

Data gathering occurred at the 2025 Mentoring Conference, an event held annually at the Mentoring Institute, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. Developmental Networks for Wellbeing: The Impact of Mentoring on Individual and Organizational Performance and Growth was the conference theme. The topic of the plenary was wellbeing as a mentoring model for educational settings (Mullen & Reames, 2025). A follow-up presentation, also 50 minutes, focused on activities that engage novice wellbeing through mentoring (Reames & Mullen, 2025).

Participant identity was protected in that data were non-identifying from the outset. Completed activities were voluntarily submitted without attendees' identifiers (name, institution, and contact information). Verbal permission was granted for publishing the anonymized data before the activities ensued. Anyone choosing not to submit their written responses was, by default, declining to participate in the study, with the understanding that they could do the exercises without providing their handwritten notations on activity sheets. The number of completed Exit Tickets was 114, and the total attendance for both sessions was 150.

Attendees were mentoring researchers and practitioners mainly from higher education institutions, as well as professionals from healthcare, government, nonprofit, and business sectors. They were from universities, colleges, schools, and medical schools in the US and Canada. The researchers were seeking to exchange mentoring and wellbeing knowledge, while the practitioners, mainly coordinators of established or budding mentoring initiatives, were intent on building or improving programs for students or employees. Study participants within this larger group were encouraged to submit their completed assignment sheets for data gathering purposes, first photographing these handwritten documents with a cellphone to retain a copy. Prior to the presentations, PowerPoint slides, exercises (blank), and a booklet containing all five activities with instructions were uploaded to the conference's website portal. Conventioneers had access to these downloadable full-text files and were free to use them at no cost. In both sessions, the presenters encouraged attendees to utilize or adapt the activities in their own settings.

The plenary session, held in a spacious banquet room, attracted a female majority. Across attendees, race/ethnicity was African American, Mexican American, White, and other. In the subsequent presentation that took place in a classroom, there was also representation from all these races/ethnicities and two males only. Participants were faculty in higher education, including educational leadership, higher education staff/directors, practitioners in nursing and other fields, consultants, and K–12 administrators. (Participant demographic data were not included in the conference reports of session feedback that provided statistics for content, methodology, and presenter).

At the outset of this follow-up session, participants introduced themselves to the group. They were also prompted to share what had drawn them to the 9:00 a.m. session, given that they had already been at the presentation the day before and completed several activities. The most frequently stated reason indicated that this group of professionals was intent on returning to learn more about the actionable activities and possibilities for applying and modifying them. They also said that they had enjoyed what they had learned thus far and were eager to expose their staff or students to practical ways of understanding mentoring for wellbeing. An educational leadership professor, drawn to activity involvement for novice principals as a topic, had a stake in this population's wellbeing and mentoring. Still others, who had translated "novice principal" into new nurses or another group, were seeking to enrich their domain of work with innovative ideas and strategies for improving the lives of those under their care.

Data Sources

The authors' data sources were: (a) researcher reflective notetaking in the form of verbal and written memoing and (b) transcription coding and analysis of participant responses.

Reflective Notetaking and Analysis

Research on memoing was confirmed that researcher reflexivity work is necessary. Accordingly, qualitative methodologists Braun and Clarke (2024) argued that researchers need to "'own' and articulate their perspectives" (p. 611), a crucial step in assuring quality in research. Researcher notetaking occurred before, during, and after both presentations during planning sessions via Zoom (using the AI transcription feature), email, and in person. Reflexivity was enacted through reciprocal sharing of professional and academic positioning and biases about mentoring and wellbeing. It became clear that both authors were invested in mentoring for wellbeing; also, each presumed a vitally important connection between mentoring and wellbeing, having already published exploratory research along these lines (Adair & Reames, 2025; Reames & Mullen, 2025). Curious, they wondered whether participants would also see or sense a linkage.

The authors struggled with how much time to spend on the models and activities, coming to realize that a personal transition would be good. Each crafted a story about their own wellbeing journey, sharing it with the other for feedback before telling it to an audience. In hindsight, transformation in each presenter's life was triggered by a wake-up call, departure from a state of despair (life disruption), to gradually reclaiming mental and physical health. Affirming strategies included fitness routines (power yoga and weightlifting), a sense of belonging in health-minded communities, new friendships and renewed ties, dramatic personal changes (e.g., weight loss/gain and nutrition), and, for one author, job/home relocation to another state.

Also, the presenters engaged in reflective exchanges following each session, recording basic facts (participant demographics, attendance numbers, etc.). Importantly, they produced documentation onsite that accounted for one another's personal reactions. Three prompts were devised for this very purpose: (a) How do you feel that session went? (b) What were your aha moments or impressions (sudden insight, realization, or understanding)? (c) What informal feedback have you received from attendees and how (in passing, via email, in a session or at a social event)? "Aha moments," which proved revealing, are described in the Discussion.

Transcription Coding and Analysis

Data gathered from in-session activities at the two presentations were qualitatively analyzed. First, deductive codes (*activity*, *mentoring*, *wellbeing,* etc.) were identified from the authors' presentation materials and the conference theme, in addition to salient research studies. Second, inductive codes (e.g., *holistic mentoring*, *intentionality*, *trust*, etc.) emerged in the process of independently coding typed data and tracking potential codes using color fonts.

Transcribing handwritten notes to text involved dividing up participant responses on the activity sheets, then recording the data using the built-in microphone feature on two laptop computers. A single transcription was produced for coding purposes. The authors put all responses pertaining to a specific prompt from the Exit

Ticket and other activities under each question so that the data/responses would be organized around particular prompts. The text was prepared for thematic analysis, and all data were manually coded by both researchers. Some activities were introduced and pondered, while participants completed others.

To promote methodological quality, coherence, and transparency in reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2024) provided strategies: awareness of data; creating initial codes; generating, reviewing, defining, and naming themes; and writing the report. Following these steps generated insights and encouraged active engagement with data throughout the analytical process. A checklist of codes was developed and utilized during the coding process; results were compared only after each researcher had each independently arrived at tentative codes and themes. Data draft writing went back-and-forth until finalized. Codes and themes were refined during data sessions, at which time agreement was reached. Six themes, the naming of them, and participant quotations that best illustrated each theme transpired.

Engagement activities were co-designed to increase participation, connection, networking, community, and enthusiasm at the two presentations. Conference-sponsored movement mediation occurred at the beginning of the plenary. The PERMA and SACEW models were introduced by the authors, followed by activities and question-and answer. Although data were generated by the Gratitude Letter and Developmental Mentoring Network activities and the follow-up presentation, it turned out that most comments were in direct response to the last activity (Exit Ticket) that concluded both sessions. Thus, the Findings section focuses on the Exit Ticket feedback received, which corresponds with the major themes.

To provide context, the authors' research-supported PERMA activities for wellbeing in mentoring relationships, a set of five exercises, align with the PERMA domains. All concepts, instructions, and visuals were modified or created; the Exit Ticket Activity is original.

- P = Positive emotion/activity 1: Gratitude Letter This guided activity is written by mentors or mentees who want to strengthen their mentoring relationship by enhancing positive emotions.

- E = Engagement/activity 2: Mentoring Bingo. This exercise sparks engagement and conversation within a mentoring group. Participants receive a bingo card with prompts regarding mentoring experiences, strengths, and wellbeing practices, such as "uses gratitude practices," "has a peer mentor," and "believes in strengths-based feedback." Moving around the room, they ask people questions in association with the prompt. Once a row fills on their bingo card, "bingo!" is heard.

- R = Relationships/activity 3: Developmental Mentoring Network ("bullseye")The participant identifies and maps key individuals currently in their network whom they believe support their growth. This exercise helps with recognizing a network of mentors who may be contributing different types of support (coaching, sponsorship, protection, role modeling, acceptance, and friendship). They also map which mentoring functions (psychosocial and career) each mentor fulfills. Observing potential gaps in their network, they can consider cultivating new relationships that speak to purposes and functions.

- M = Meaning/activity 4: Core Values This values-based reflection tool enables mentoring participants to identify their core values in the four domains of work/education, personal growth/health, relationships, and leisure. They place a mark on the bullseye to show how closely their current behaviors align with those values. The closer their mark to the target and further from the outer ring, the more fully they are living out their values is the idea (Lundgren et al., 2012).

- A = Accomplishment/activity 5: Exit Ticket This individual reflection on learning in the session was elicited relative to three prompts:

    1. Something I learned that I could bring back to my mentoring relationships.

    2. One mentoring practice that I heavily rely on in my work.

    3. What I want to remember about mentoring for wellbeing that shows promise building relationships.

Findings

Analysis of participants' reflections revealed six themes that view mentoring for wellbeing as both conceptual and practical: (1) intentionality in mentoring, (2) developmental mentoring network awareness, (3) equity and accessibility, (4) mentoring practices for flourishing, (5) wellbeing as a pathway for holistic mentoring, and (6) theory translated into experiential action. Together, these themes demonstrate that mentors and mentees transform theory into lived, relational practice that supports flourishing. Due to the volume of comments from 114 participants, representative quotes are from the Exit Ticket exercise only. Because the exit responses often referred to the earlier activities, this approach to the findings makes sense.

Intentionality in Mentoring

Intentionality in mentoring—the conscious, planned practice of guiding another's growth by aligning clearly defined goals with developmental outcomes—emerged as a defining feature of mentorship. Participants realized that aligning self-care with goals can support fulfilling and lasting mentor–mentee relationships: "This plenary forced me to practice supporting my own wellbe-

ing as well as my mentee's wellbeing" and "I need to keep considering the wellbeing of mentors/mentees because the relationship is reciprocal and intentional." Being deliberate about increasing and diversifying mentorship in one's network was voiced: "Frankly, I learned I need to expand my relationships. I have little diversity in my network. The Developmental Mentoring Network Activity has been an excellent way for me to seize the opportunity to extend my network" and "Intentionality helps mentees build their networks."

Other participants emphasized the importance of reflection and goal setting: "Goals and values are different but dependent on each other. Mentors should be well-versed in their own values and goals to support their mentees." It was observed that intentionality requires "clarifying values and goals as part of reflective practice," "allowing the mentee to express their goals for growth and accomplishment," "meeting students where they are," and "being intentional about support." Someone aptly stated, "Intentionally having one-on-one meetings in addition to email and text supports [consistency, structure, and accountability]."

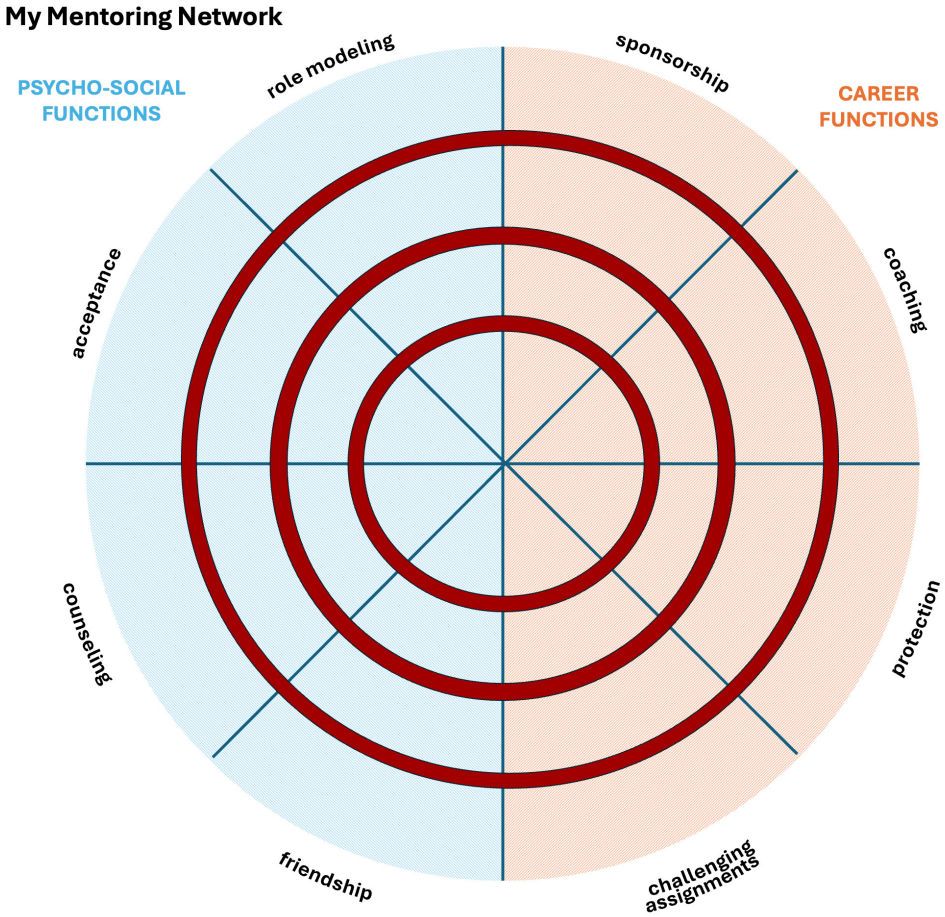
Developmental Mentoring Network Awareness

The developmental mentoring network conversation considered psychosocial and career functions. This activity (Figure 1) guided individual reflection and group discussion. Each side of the display denotes a vital mentoring function and essential practice. On the left, psychosocial functions are associated with role modeling, acceptance, counseling, and friendship; on the right, career functions are linked to sponsorship, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments.

Systemically mapping mentoring as beneficiaries allowed participants to identify strengths, gaps, opportunities, directions, and future possibilities. Several individuals pointed to the need to diversify and expand their mentoring network and find opportunities for doing do. Others recognized evolving needs like "What is missing in my network?" and "I never thought about how my mentor could offer protection." While some wanted to begin "looking for mentors who fill gaps," others were pleased at the richness of their networks, even expressing the desire to "nurture relationships so as to sustain the relationship" and "keep our relationship alive."

Figure 1:

Developmental Mentoring Network Activity (Searby, 2025; reprinted with permission)



The activity also prompted recognition that effective mentoring builds supportive networks across personal and professional realms. Moreover, developmental network awareness was linked to wellbeing, spurring potential action: "Checking in on the wellbeing of my circle will help me see how connectedness sustains us." Visual mapping was described as diagnostic and restorative—"an excellent tool for identifying where I have minimal relationships that need to be stronger."

Participants listened to Reames' story about her developmental mentoring network and how it related to wellbeing. A visual showing her network data accompanied this telling. Then attendees undertook the activity (Figure 1) for themselves. On their network sheet and in their exit feedback, they named major influencers and supporters of their psychosocial and career development, noticing patterns and any omissions in their networks, even pondering next steps. Based on the comments, their understanding of mentoring networks had changed and deepened.

Equity and Accessibility

Equitable mentoring was a concept described in the plenary presentation as integral to SACEW (Mullen, 2025a, 2025b). Responses to this idea unfolded. Equity and accessibility were viewed by some participants as prerequisites for safe and effective mentoring. Deficits in this regard were noted: "I don't have a strong network or safe space to be vulnerable." Culturally responsive approaches and psychological safety were values and concerns: "I must realize that people are not on an equal playing field—it's easier for some. This is rooted in culture." Connecting equity, safety, and authenticity someone wrote, "I should be authentic to who I am so I can create psychological safety on my team." Another asserted, "Keeping equity at the center allows mentoring to meet people where they are." Others acknowledged that "equitable mentoring promotes inclusion and emotional wellbeing" and that "gratitude from the mentor toward the mentee promotes safety and connection." It was the mentor's responsibility to notice differing needs, as in: "One mentee may need protection, another role modeling."

Relational work depends on trust, courage, and conversation—an equity value several mentoring participants expressed aloud and in writing: "Building trust to have courageous conversations involves letting mentees know you have their best interests at heart." Another insight about equitable mentoring was: "I want to remember that wellbeing is all inclusive with more than just career functions." To this individual, "those involved agree on a process and explore values and goals, going further and deeper." Equity and accessibility as a theme emphasize that equitable mentoring is both intentional and relational, and that empathy, trust, and courageous conversation are key to the authenticity of mentoring for wellbeing.

Mentoring Practices for Flourishing

Authenticity, reflection, and empathy were repeatedly cited as core practices. As one participant stated, "Listening is the lost art found in reflection and wonder." Others described authenticity as foundational: "I rely heavily on being authentic, person-centered, and open-ended in questioning." Many also emphasized gratitude and positive emotion: "Expressing gratitude is so important and remembering how much support we have and that we are capable of providing to others," and "Building trust with the mentee is easier when you see them as a whole person." Individual participants viewed authenticity as ethical and emotional work. Some wrote that "trust, resilience, and respect form the foundation of my relationships," while others described "sharing personal stories" and "storytelling as a way to connect." These practices align with the PERMA domains: gratitude with Positive Emotion, authenticity with Meaning, active listening with Engagement, relationships with Relationships, and reflection with Accomplishment.

Wellbeing as a Pathway for Holistic Mentoring

Metaphorically speaking, wellbeing was likened to an evolving pathway for mentoring success that spurs professional and personal growth. A particularly powerful response about wellbeing was, "I've been on a lifelong wellbeing journey—this session reminded me that I'm on the right path, and that my own wellbeing is truly what can help keep my relationships healthy and myself well as I build new relationships." Others similarly spoke to "relational growth" and "emotional growth." One individual responded: "Wellbeing of the mentor and mentee is central to the relationship—it's reciprocal and intentional." They identified gratitude, reflection, and positive emotion as vital to sustaining wellbeing: "Gratitude actually promotes and helps improve wellbeing" and "If we care for ourselves, we can better care for others."

Holistic mentoring was conceptualized as "whole person, a third wave, which recognizes mentoring for wellbeing as completely inclusive of career and psychosocial functions. It's more than just a career." It was frequently mentioned that "mentee success isn't achievable without having wellbeing as mentors," and that "building trust to have courageous conversations enhances growth." Someone thought that "Holistic mentoring isn't always possible from one mentor. We may need multiple mentors in our circle." The wellbeing pathway was seen as a lifelong process where mentoring parties practice self-care, reflection, and authentic connection.

Theory Translated Into Experiential Action

Theory translated into experiential action was expressed as a value. Hands-on, real-world experiences rooted in theory promote actions through which one learns, connects, grows, heals, or solves problems. As someone remarked, "Starting with meditation allows people to make connections" between theory and lived experience, while others valued "mentor bingo" and storytelling as ways to "bring rich material to life." In particular, they demonstrated an ability to connect positive psychology and mentoring theory to concrete experiences. Consistently, they described the PERMA model as an "approachable way to make

mentoring support visible." A common response was that gratitude letters, developmental mentoring-network maps, PERMA bingo, and reflective journals turn abstractions from mentoring and positive psychology theory into relatable ideas that may spark insights and feelings. For example, about the Gratitude Letter exercise, someone wrote: "Expressing gratitude is so important and remembering how much support we have and are capable of providing to others is important as well."

Appreciation was voiced about wellbeing theory and exercises: "PERMA and the activities provide broader language to think about and activate mentorship discussions. It's an addition I want to make to my practices as a mentor." PERMA—described as "a great anchor acronym" for translating theory into practice—attracted affirmations: "Taking time to show gratitude to those you encounter along the mentoring pathway makes theory come alive."

Discussion

Mentoring for wellbeing may be an emerging evolution in mentoring theory, research, and practice. Participant reflections revealed that positive psychology is powerful when mentoring and wellbeing are combined in knowledge bases, and in people's work and lives. This new and refreshing way to frame mentoring equates with a whole-person endeavor rooted in wellbeing. Thus, wellbeing is not an add-on in mentoring relationships, processes, and programs; rather, it is an integral generative dynamic that supports the flourishing of mentorships across professions, organizations, and disciplines (Kram, 1983; Seligman, 2011, 2018).

Participants' responses evidenced six key themes, three of which we return to here. Intentionality in mentoring materialized through statements that upheld the importance of purposeful connection, clarifying values and goals as a starting point in mentoring relationships, and consistent check-ins. They described intentional mentoring as a practice in which mentors and mentees proactively decide the purpose and direction of the relationship. Importantly, participants recognized connectedness and belonging as central to wellbeing, thereby reinforcing SACEW's focus on support, accessibility, collaboration, equity, and wellbeing in mentoring relationships (Mullen, 2025b). With the HQSMM-W, regularly pausing to reflect on progress echoed this framework's emphasis on shared meaning-making, reflection, and mutual development (Adair & Reames, 2025). Both conceptualizations of mentoring extend the classical ideas of psychosocial and career functions by explicitly recognizing wellbeing and self-care as critical to mentoring effectiveness as well as sustainability. Participants added that intentional mentoring requires slowing down, listening deeply, and prioritizing discussion in the relationship.

The equity and accessibility theme also surfaced as foundational to nurturing wellbeing in mentoring relationships (Mullen, 2025b). Participants saw a need for culturally responsive mentoring, psychological safety, and differentiated support attuned to individuals' identities and lived experiences. This theme aligns with mentoring scholarship that presents equitable developmental relationships as not only promoting competence and confidence but also belonging, safety, and hope (Kutsyuruba & Kochan, 2024; Mullen, 2025a). Participants recognized gratitude, authenticity, and compassion as practices that elevate equity, which supports the call in positive psychology literature for nurturement of quality relationships as a pathway to flourishing (Kern et al., 2014; Seligman, 2011).

Another theme spoke to the translation of theory into experiential action as both meaningful and necessary for desired impact in human spheres. Participants described feeling more grounded in PERMA and the mentoring blueprints after learning about or engaging in gratitude writing, developmental network mapping, and values-based reflection. These real-world and simulated activities allow participants to internalize abstract concepts, ideally acting upon them in professional mentoring contexts. Reactions to the activities suggest that ongoing, intentional practice, in contrast with passive knowledge acquisition, creates space for deeper understanding of what it means to thrive in mentoring relationships.

Taken together, the six findings indicate that mentoring for wellbeing in adult learning is a shared responsibility and reciprocal process rather than an individual endeavor. Participants embraced mentoring as growth, compassion, purpose, and resilience, which suggests that structured wellbeing practices aligned with mentoring practices may help them to thrive or prosper even more in their increasingly complex professional environments.

"Aha moments" for the authors from the plenary session in particular produced seven impressions, which reinforce the findings from analyzed transcriptions. These moments, captured in the researchers' reflective notetaking, follow.

The level of intimacy, openness, and storytelling was a gift from the two participant groups, which fascinated the authors, striking them as unusual. Attendees evidenced being highly responsive to the invitation to individually ponder or complete activities, then share aloud if desired. Volunteers spoke to the entire group from their round tables or into a mic.

One participant said to a presenter/author that they really liked how their two presentations were structured. Elaborating, they said that the plenary had begun with abstract concepts, moved to the personal level (presenters' individual wellbeing journey), then to activities elevated with participant sharing and question-and-answer, and concluding with feedback (Exit Ticket Activity). The next morning's session was tailored to novice professionals, with time spent on key concepts, school principal data and meaning making, PERMA activities, and the Exit Ticket.

Another individual confided that they found our sessions to be particularly inspiring and up-

lifting, anchored in idea generation with practical examples. They added that these presentations were attractive to attendees from underrepresented populations who appreciated (a) the time for reflection and interaction, (b) attention on inclusion aspects of mentoring for wellbeing from an equity lens, and (c) invitation to network by sharing contact information.

In the plenary session following the Developmental Mentorship Network Activity, an attendee asked the group what "sponsorship" looks like in the mentoring of African American females. She lacked this experience and was seeking ideas. An African American female responded with a scenario from her own life that illustrated the importance and power of like role models in professional settings, encouraging other women to find a good match.

After completing the Developmental Mentorship Network Activity, someone shared with the entire group that they could imagine producing not one but multiple versions that reflect "moments" in time. For this person, the influential mentor named as their bullseye (center of target, Figure 1) shifted depending on the situation being recalled, implying that mentoring networks are dynamic, thus only appearing "static." It makes sense for this activity to be completed at different points in one's life or career, as situations and perspectives may change.

Someone did not know what "protection" meant in the mentoring lexicon, so a definition and examples were whispered during the activity portion. This exchange made it clear that basic mentoring ideas from classical studies should not be presumed, regardless of the overall level of expertise and specialization in a mentoring gathering.

Another individual confided that they were translating all mentoring concepts and prompts on the activity sheets into "coaching/coach/coachee" language before responding. Being proactive like this made the exercise meaningful and relevant to them in both sessions.

Conclusion

As proposed in this article, the intersection between mentoring and wellbeing can be meaningfully explored. Mentoring can be used as a method to apply positive psychology principles, focusing on a mentee's strengths, meaning, and engagement to promote flourishing and improve wellbeing. This approach goes beyond traditional mentoring relationships and problem-solving to build upon a mentee's existing positive core, such as their resilience, strengths, values, and aspirations. Mentoring can support wellbeing through the mentor's role in providing support, guidance, and a safe space for mentees to be open and honest.

Mentoring blueprints like SACEW and the HQSMM-W combined with wellbeing theory, such as PERMA, can transform mentoring experiences into endeavors that are more holistic. Turning to implications for practice and research, the study's findings suggest that brief, repeatable wellbeing activities (e.g., gratitude letters) have benefits, including the experience of flow in mentoring situations. Mentoring blueprints support the assessment of mentoring relationships, enabling their viability and, importantly, vitality. Equitable mentoring through equity-centered conversations, activities, and processes can cultivate psychological safety, sponsorship, and belonging for many in educational relationships.

For research, more work needs to focus on mentoring for wellbeing as a means for building resilience in professions and organizations. Much of the literature supports resilience as an important outcome of mentoring but wellbeing is new to mentoring. As such, it is time for wellbeing to be thoroughly examined as an integral dimension of mentoring that can generate meaning, build human and organizational resilience, and support future possibilities. Studies are encouraged that examine how the wellbeing dimension of mentoring can support mentoring parties to set goals, establish values, recover from setbacks, and persist with their dreams.

Reflective time is key. Mentoring participants were able to achieve cognitive distance from their situations. The Developmental Mentoring Network Activity gave them time to sketch their own constellation of mentoring relationships, seeing it from a high-level, overarching perspective. Having the opportunity to consider these mentoring trends elicited questions and insights. Becoming attuned to breakthroughs about mentoring for wellbeing that have promise for relationship-building was a game changer too. Analyzing a network's structure, functions, and dynamics as a system offers a meta view of what is or is not working in one's life. Realization through self-assessment can lead to taking ownership of strategic moves. Moving beyond isolated individual relationships implies expansion. Bold mentoring visions are likely to yield enlarged, varied, and inclusive networks that extend impact for the benefit of all.

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Mentoring is whole person, a third wave, which recognizes mentoring for wellbeing as completely inclusive of career and psychosocial functions. It's more than just a career. (participant response, Mullen & Reames [2025], UNM 18th Annual Mentoring Conference).

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