

HAPPINESS COACH CERTIFICATION COURSE

MODULE 3

# Module 3:

## HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING (SESSION 3)

Each module is focused on a particular subject from positive psychology.

In this module, we will discuss happiness, well-being, and how to cultivate positive emotions in our daily life. Before we begin, it is important to take stock of everything you have covered so far with your client. This will allow you to:

- Analyze the results together.
- Gather your client's impressions since the last session.
- Answer any questions your client may have.
- Know which areas your client may have found difficult.

Our first objective in this module is to define happiness. We will then guide you towards more targeted exercises and objectives.

As in all modules, remember that it is critical to spend time practicing the exercises yourself before giving them to your clients.

### ★ The objective of this module

- Cover the definition of happiness.
- Discuss the beginning of positive psychology and the distinction between happiness and well-being.
- Discuss the PERMA theory of well-being and its five pillars.
- Discuss how to approach the five pillars with your client by using practical tools.
- Learn how to use rating scales.
- Analyze objectives in areas matching your client's profile.

## Introduction

Throughout this module, our objective is to help you better understand happiness and learn how to improve your client's daily life.

Being as happy as possible is something that everyone on earth aspires to achieve. With each passing day, we all strive to define our purpose in life.

Unfortunately, society today offers us so many distractions that we sometimes find it hard to truly focus on the things we want to achieve. We often want what we can't have, and we forget to put aside time for ourselves. Positive psychology was started to address these problems.

So, what is happiness? What is its general definition?

## The definition of happiness

*A lasting state of completeness, satisfaction, and calmness, with a pleasant and balanced state of mind and body that is absent of suffering, stress or worry. This represents a lasting, permanent state of balance.*

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This notion has been discussed since at least the 3rd century BC. Epicurus, a famous Greek philosopher, had already written about it in his works. Some 2,400 years later, this subject is still being talked about. This proves that achieving happiness is very much a common desire amongst all human beings and has been for a very long time.

### ★ How does happiness manifest in our bodies?

Happiness is expressed in the human body thanks to three substances: Serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins. Researchers have observed that in a state of depression, the levels of these substances drop considerably. In other words, happiness is the result of a chemical process that occurs within the body.

### ★ A genetic element to happiness

In the 1990s, a group of scientists from London, Harvard, California, and Zurich worked on a potential connection between happiness and the genes we inherit. They looked at whether our DNA influences our happiness.

They studied thousands of sets of twins and drew the following conclusion: 50% of our happiness depends on the genes we inherit, and we cannot change this.

However, the good news is we can influence the remaining 50% of our happiness. This is the area where positive psychology comes into play to help us promote as much happiness as possible within our lives.

**Note:** We encourage you to broach this subject with your client. It is critical to explain to them that “half of their happiness” can be worked on, influenced, and modified by the steps you will carry out with them.

## The three concepts of happiness and well-being in psychology

In psychology research, there are traditionally three concepts of happiness and well-being. They are the hedonic concept, the eudaimonic concept and the more modern trend of positive psychology (the PERMA Model). We will go through a basic overview of the three concepts of happiness.

### ★ The hedonic concept of happiness

The *hedonic concept of happiness* relates to moods, feelings, and attitudes, as well as our level of satisfaction within our lives.

This concept examines the positive and negative aspects of an individual’s life: Is the person’s life characterized by happy times or unpleasant experiences? This concept defines happiness as subjective well-being.

According to psychologist Ed Diener, *subjective well-being* is determined by **three pillars**:

➔ **Positive emotions.**

➔ **Negative emotions.**

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➔ **Life satisfaction**, i.e., how happy someone is with their life.

### ★ The eudaimonic concept of happiness

The eudaimonic element asks a person how content they are with their life, goals, expectations, and successes. The individual examines their current life to determine if it matches the life they desire. Therefore, the eudaimonic element is mainly mental.

This approach includes several theories. Two of the most well-known are by Abraham Maslow (who created the pyramid of the hierarchy of needs) and Carl Rogers (the theory of psychological development and self-realization.)

These two concepts which were at odds for a long time encouraged psychologists to develop a more contemporary theory – which came into being thanks to Seligman. This marks the beginning of positive psychology as introduced in module 1.

### ★ The theory of well-being: the PERMA model

Happiness and well-being are two different notions. Well-being is created in the mind; it is a concept. However, happiness is a “tangible thing” that we can measure. This means you can define your happiness score at any time; for example, on a scale between 0 to 10.

Well-being cannot be measured as it depends on several factors. Despite this, according to Seligman, well-being can still have distinctive characteristics.

## The elements of well-being

Well-being comprises several elements: positive emotions, engagement, positive personal relationships, the meaning of life, and its embodiment (or accomplishments).

Seligman thinks that these five elements can help us lead a fulfilled life of happiness and meaning (PERMA stands for: *Positive Emotion, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishments/Achievements.*)

## Positive emotions

Positive emotions have an obvious connection to happiness. Having said that, harnessing positive emotion is not simply about smiling more but also being optimistic and looking at the past, present and future from a positive perspective.

This way of looking at life will help your client in all situations: their relationships, work, activities, and the things they love. Thanks to this newfound outlook, your client will be more optimistic and will go the extra mile to achieve self-fulfillment.

There are highs and lows in everyone’s life. Focusing on the negatives and what is not going well will only make achieving happiness more difficult. Therefore, it is important to focus on the positive aspects of our daily lives. By doing so, you will also be taking positive action for your general health (“a healthy mind in a healthy body.”)

We should also highlight the distinction between pleasure and joy:

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- Pleasure corresponds to satisfying physical needs, such as thirst, hunger, and sleep, that are necessary for survival.
- Joy comes from stimulation and intellectual creativity, for example, when a child has finished building a complex Lego car that has taken a lot of effort, they will likely be radiating joy and satisfaction.

**The more your client experiences positive emotions in their life, the better they will face current and new challenges.** Researchers in positive psychology have studied the world's happiest people and have found some common characteristics, one of which is obvious: happy people embrace their own positive emotions in all forms!

Along with her team, Barbara Fredrickson, an American teacher and researcher, has highlighted that *positive emotions promote positive behavior, positive interpersonal relationships, better health, better longevity, etc.*

### ★ Exercise – The three good things

Here is an exercise to help you focus on positive emotions. Introduce the following approach to your client:

*“We’re going to work on positive emotions through a basic exercise in positive psychology. By doing this, you will be able to connect to the positive aspects of your life.*

*Every day for a week, make a list of three things that have happened during the day that made you feel good. You could go a little further and also note why you think these things happened. They could be “big” or “small” things that felt important to you at the time and brought about positive emotion.*

*Next to each event, note the positive emotions you felt. Without looking for anything out of the ordinary, write down the simple things you noticed around you: the smile of a passer-by in the street, a shop window with a pretty arrangement, music on the radio, a compliment you received, the coffee machine was finally repaired, a ray of sunshine at lunchtime, the smell of coffee in the kitchen, etc.*

*This exercise will help you highlight the positives in your life and bring them to the forefront of your mind. You will be surprised to note just how many positives there are in your life, and realizing this, will enhance your well-being and increase your motivation.”*

## Engagement

A growing number of works in psychology show that engagement has a positive connection with personal well-being.

In fact, we could compare engagement to a powerful fuel or combustible material that drives the most static of objects into motion. Engagement is a source of huge motivation. The concept of engagement is characterized by **three dimensions: energy, dedication (involvement) and absorption (immersion)**. Now, we will examine these three dimensions in more detail:

- **Energy** is characterized by our will to put effort into our activities. Engagement also promotes resilience and raises our threshold of resistance to tiredness. It encourages us to persevere when faced with difficulties.

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- **Dedication** is shown through investing greatly in ourselves and embracing the desire to take on challenges for causes we hold dear.
- **Absorption** is defined as the pleasure of being immersed in our work or activities. In this state, it is easy to lose track of time. Additional hours worked by nurses can sometimes fall into this category.

It is essential to find activities that require our full engagement. They help us learn, grow, and nourish our personal happiness.

**Note:** *You want to determine the activities that are most likely to lead to engagement for your client. They may include playing sports, dancing, or working on an interesting project. We all need something in life that absorbs us completely in the present moment and creates a sense of “flow.”*

This state of flow is characterized by a feeling of energetic concentration. Therefore, you will work with your client to find out which activities are likely to bring about this state for them.

To reach a **state of flow**, **three conditions** must be met:

- The activity should have **pre-defined objectives and a clear progression**, giving direction and structure to the task.
- The task must result in **clear and immediate feedback**, which will help us to adapt to changing demands and adjust our performance to maintain the state of flow.
- There must be a **good balance** between perceived challenges and skills.

### ★ Exercise - Exploring experiences of the state of “flow”

**The goal of the exercise:** Help your client understand what a sense of “flow” feels like so that they can identify it.

#### Instructions:

- Begin by explaining to your client the notion of “flow,” the three conditions we have just described.
- Ask your client to reflect on a time or task when they were completely absorbed and focused on an activity and had the feeling that time and the outside world did not exist.
- Guide your client in their reflections and ask the following questions:
  - ❖ When and where did this event take place?
  - ❖ Were you alone or with someone? With whom?
  - ❖ What were you doing?
  - ❖ What did you feel?
  - ❖ Think back to the beginning of this activity? How did it go?
  - ❖ How did you feel after this experience?
- Evaluate the exercise by asking them the following questions:
  - ❖ How did you feel when thinking about this activity and answering the questions about it?

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- ❖ Can you describe any other times where you had this sense of a state of “flow” in your life?
- ❖ Can you find common areas in all these activities? (*For example, you were sharing the experience with others, or on the contrary, you were always alone.*)
- ❖ Do you think you could do these activities more often?
- ❖ What would be required to do these activities more often?

This is how to fully guide your client. After this exercise, they will have at least one activity in mind that makes them feel good. They will have recalled how and when they carried it out and will have set an objective to engage in it more frequently.

## Positive human relationships

Relationships and social connections are some of the most important aspects of life. Human beings are social creatures who grow through connection, love, friendship, and strong emotional bonds with one another.

Building positive relationships with your parents, siblings, peers, and friends is essential. Having solid relationships with others helps you get through difficult times.

Isolation is the worst possible thing for our mental health. Therefore, if your client is in this situation, it is crucial to guide them toward opening up to others. The following exercise will help them do so.

### ★ Active listening exercise

Explain to your client that this exercise aims to help them connect with others. Then, give them the following advice:

“Take time each day to really listen to someone you are having a conversation with. This could be someone in your family, friends, professional contacts, or simply a stranger you meet out of the blue. Let it happen as naturally as possible.”

## The meaning of life

At some point, everyone goes through a phase where they ponder the meaning of life. Having a goal and finding meaning is important for being happy and fulfilled.

Helping your client understand the impact of their work (or activity) and why they have chosen the path that they have chosen will help them feel more fulfilled.

“What should I do with my life? What do I enjoy doing that is really important?” These questions are crucial for your client to ask themselves as they will help them derive meaning in the tasks they do daily.

### ★ Exercise – Being aware of the meaning of our lives

**The goal of the exercise:** This questionnaire is an excellent way to help your client evaluate the meaning of life.

**Instructions:** We will use the rating scale below:

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Totally disagree		Somewhat disagree		Neutral		Tend to agree		Totally agree

State the following affirmations to your client and ask them to reply using the rating scale above. Your client can also use their own words, which you can then translate into numbers:

- My life is completely full of meaning.
- I can dedicate most of my time to activities or tasks that seem meaningful and useful.
- In the past, I have led a life full of meaning.
- Right now, my life is interesting and full of meaning.
- I want to live an interesting life full of meaning in the years to come.
- Up to now, I have a positive outlook on the meaning of my life and its purpose.
- I have a positive outlook on the meaning of my life and its purpose for my future endeavors.

There is no set score, but you should know that the higher the score, the more your client sees their life as meaningful. In module 4, we will look at how to approach this notion in depth.

## Accomplishments (or achievements)

To evolve and feel fulfilled, your client needs to have goals. This will help them feel a sense of accomplishment.

**Personal accomplishment** is a fundamental human need. It has been placed at the top of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs and is a fundamental contributing factor to our well-being.

Even trying to achieve their objectives could give your client a feeling of satisfaction. Moreover, when they have achieved their objectives, they will feel even more proud, with a huge sense of accomplishment.

Overall, striving for accomplishments (achievements) in life is important to encourage us to develop and be fulfilled.

## Tools to carry out your client's "happiness and well-being" assessment

We are going to look at some essential tools to create overall happiness and well-being assessment for your client.

### ✦ The fulfillment scale

This scale has eight items that describe the most important aspects of human function in terms of positive psychology. A higher score indicates more self-esteem.



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**The objective of this test:** To measure how your client perceives themselves and evaluate their success in different areas of their well-being, such as social relationships, self-esteem, objectives, and optimism.

**Score:** Add all the items together to get the total score. You can calculate the average score by dividing the total score by the number of items, in this case, eight. A higher score reflects a higher sense of fulfillment.

**Instructions:** We are going to use the rating scale below:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

State the following affirmations to your client and ask them to rate themselves using the scale above. Your client can also use their own words, which you can then translate into numbers:

- I live a life full of meaning and I have objectives.
- My social relationships are strong, and I feel supported.
- I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.
- I try to contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.
- I feel competent in the activities I consider important.
- I am a good person who leads a great life.
- I am optimistic about my future.
- People respect me.

**Total score:**

**Average score (divided by eight):**

**Analysis:** The higher the score, the more your client is fulfilled and happy. It is important to retake this test with them at the end of each session to get an idea of their progress. You can also analyze their weak areas to reinforce these pillars of well-being.

**Here is an example of the result and analysis of this test:**

- I live a life full of meaning and I have objectives: 2
- My social relationships are strong, and I feel supported: 5
- I am engaged and interested in my daily activities: 2
- I try to contribute to the happiness and well-being of others: 5
- I feel competent in the activities I consider important: 4
- I am a good person who leads a great life: 4
- I am optimistic about my future: 4
- People respect me: 6

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**Total score: 32**

**Average score (divided by 8): 4 out of 7**

This average score shows someone who is fairly fulfilled and satisfied. Your client does not seem to have problems in their relationships. They feel respected and their relationships are good. This means you can put this pillar to the side for now. On the other hand, you need to work on the following pillars with your client: the meaning of life, objectives and a sense of “flow” by helping them find enjoyable activities that they can immerse themselves in. Use the previous tools to guide you.

## Putting this into practice – The fulfillment scale

Here is an example of the results you may get by completing this test with a client. You should take the time to analyze the figures to steer your session towards the pillars of well-being the test has shown.

- I live a life full of meaning, and I have objectives: 6
- My social relationships are strong, and I feel supported: 2
- I am engaged and interested in my daily activities: 5
- I try to contribute to the happiness and well-being of others: 3
- I feel competent in the activities I consider important: 6
- I am a good person who leads a great life: 5
- I am optimistic about my future: 5
- People respect me: 3

**Total score: 35**

**Average score (divided by 8): 4.38 out of 7**

## The happiness scale

This is a brief questionnaire that will help you assess your client’s happiness. This test is based on a subjective approach. By using their own criteria, your client will make their own personal judgments regarding their happiness levels. We recommend you pair this test with the previous one.

**The objective of the test:** To carry out an overall, subjective measurement of your client’s happiness.

**Score:** Add up the ratings from the different fields listed below. Calculate the average score by dividing the total by the number of items, i.e., four. A higher score reflects a higher level of happiness and a lower score, a lower level of happiness.

**Instructions:** For the following statements, choose the score that is most indicative of your own subjective feelings about your happiness levels.

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1. I consider myself:

An unhappy person						A very happy person
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Comparing myself with most of my friends and family, I think I am:

Less happy than them						Happier than them
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. People who are happy appreciate life no matter what happens. To what extent does this describe you?

Not at all						Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. I do not feel as happy as I should be given my current life circumstances. To what extent does this describe you?

Completely						Not at all
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Total Score:**

The average score divided by 4

### Putting this into practice – the happiness scale

Here is an example of the final result. Take the time to analyze it before checking each box. For the following statements, choose the score that most closely describes how you feel about yourself.

1. I consider myself:

An unhappy person		X				A very happy person
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Comparing myself with most of my friends and family, I think I am:

Less happy			X			Happier
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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3. People who are happy appreciate life no matter what happens. To what extent does this describe you?

Not at all		X				Completely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. I do not feel as happy as I should be given my current life circumstances. To what extent does this describe you?

Totally		X				Not at all
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Score: 13**

**For the average score, add all the ratings then divide by 4: 3.25 out of 7**

The aim is to put all these tests together to gain a full scope of things. Any given test on its own will not give you the full picture. This test can be re-used quickly and easily in your future sessions. It will help you assess the overall progress you are making with your client.

## The wheel of life

Well-being is made up of several elements: overall quality of life, satisfaction in the important areas of life, a strong positive outlook (positive experiences and thoughts), not having a negative outlook (negative experiences and emotions), etc.

The wheel of life allows your client to perceive and evaluate their overall satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with different areas of their life. They can either focus on ten areas of life that matter in their eyes or you can suggest ten different areas to them as in the example we are going to show you.

After evaluating each area, you and your client will look at solutions to increase their happiness in the areas that have been selected.

### ★ The objective of the wheel of life

The goal of this tool is to help your client see and assess their overall satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with different areas of their life. This test is very important to help build your client's profile and to identify the objectives that need to be worked on.

### ★ A few tips

- This exercise can be used to clarify the areas and objectives that matter most to your client. Therefore, it is important to sit down with your client and analyze the areas of their life that are essential to improve.
- It is also important to note that your client should not waste energy focusing on areas they see as insignificant. By identifying the areas that your client deems important, you will be able to help them achieve a more focused approach to self-improvement.

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- This test should not reflect your client's past. It should focus on their current situation: how they see things now in different areas of their life and not 10 or 20 years ago.
- It is essential to use this test regularly to re-evaluate your client's situation and redefine their objectives.

### ★ Stage 1

Explain to your client that the aim of this exercise is to define their satisfaction with their life. We suggest the following ten areas, but remember the best way is to ask your client to choose for themselves:

- Money and financial situation,
- Career and work,
- Health and physical activity,
- Fun, hobbies, passions,
- Environment,
- Physical Surroundings,
- Close family and friends,
- Romantic relationship,
- Learning and development,
- Spirituality or religion.

### ★ Stage 2

Ask your client to assess their current level of satisfaction in these areas. A score of 1 is "not at all satisfied" and a score of 10 is "totally satisfied."

### ★ Stage 3

Ask your client to connect the different scores on the wheel, as shown in the example. This will give them an overview and a good visual of the test.

### ★ Stage 4

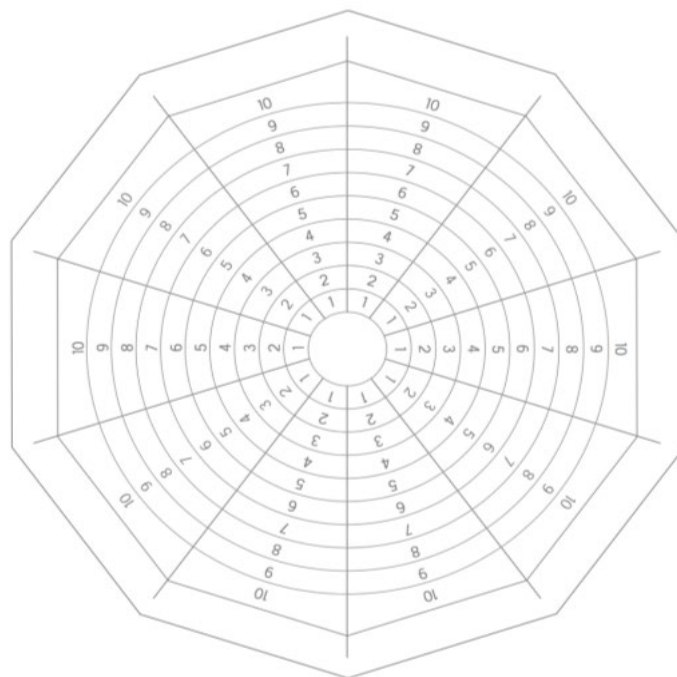
Discuss with them the important areas and what they would like to improve. What attracts their attention the most?

### ★ Stage 5

In terms of the stages your client has highlighted, ask them the following questions:

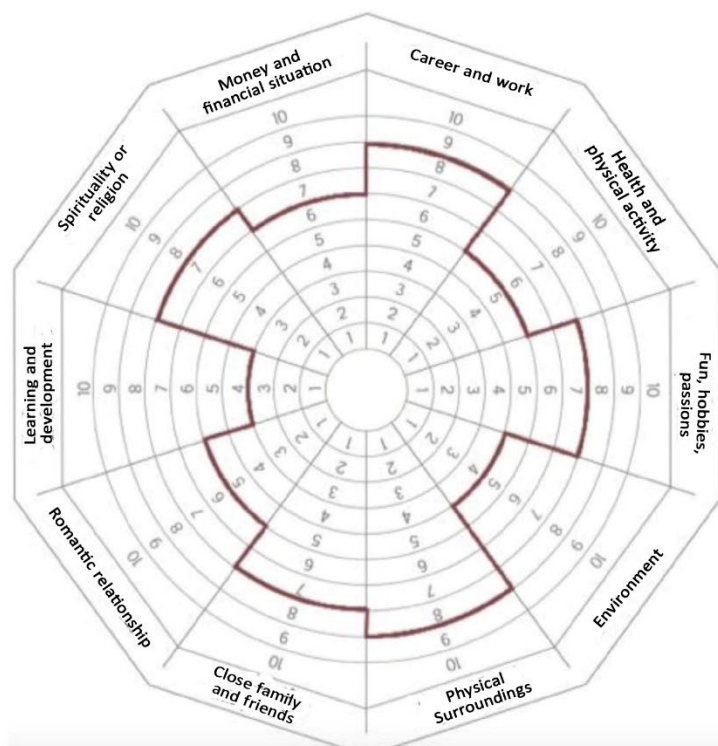
- Why do you find this area important?
- What score would you like to achieve in this area?
- What can you do to realize this objective?

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An example of a completed wheel:

- ◆ Money and financial situation,
- ◆ Career and work,
- ◆ Health and physical activity,
- ◆ Fun, hobbies, passions,
- ◆ Environment,
- ◆ Surroundings in the wider sense,
- ◆ Close family and friends,
- ◆ Romantic relationship,
- ◆ Learning and development,
- ◆ Spirituality or religion.



## Organizing session 3, “Happiness and well-being”

Here is a guideline on how you should recap this session with your client:

- **Take stock** of the overall session: analyze your client’s results, gather their impressions, answer any questions they may have, and determine which areas they found difficult or easy to comprehend.
- Explain the session’s objective: ***“We will work on your day-to-day happiness and well-being. We’re going to examine the areas of your life that are essential for your general well-being. The goal is to highlight the things that matter the most to you, look at where you are currently and your future objectives so that we can map out your progress going forward. Our objective is to perform self-assessments and understand what we want to improve on to maximize your potential for fulfillment.”***
- Define the five pillars of well-being with them so they understand which areas to focus on.
- Use the suggested exercises to help your client with this.
- Evaluate their happiness and well-being by pairing the two or three tools we’ve shown you.
- Together with them, define the objectives and the concrete actions your client must take to reach these objectives. Make sure the goals being set are achievable. If your client does not reach them, they may end up feeling discouraged.