



# WELLBEING PROJECT

Community Conversations Report  
2021

# About This Report

This report includes the insights and analysis of 102 Break O'Day community residents who participated in Community Conversations about what contributes to their wellbeing at both the individual and community level.

## Background

The Community Conversations aimed to inform the Break O'Day Wellbeing Project with the authentic voice of residents. They intended to provide fun, interactive conversations that left people walking away feeling positive about their community and inspired to make a difference. The sessions were also an opportunity to identify potential participants for the training element of the project; *The Certificate in Creating Wellbeing*.

Conversations were held in six locations over 11 events across the Break O'Day municipality during March 2021, with attendance totaling 102 people.

Location	Number of events	Attendance
Falmouth	1	6
Fingal	1	4
Pyengana Community Centre	1	0
Scamander Sports Complex	1	2
St Helens - various locations*	5	79
St Marys Town Hall	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>102</b>

\* Council Chambers, St Helens Library, St Helens Child and Family Centre, Possum Magic, St Helens Probus Club, St Helens District School.



# Community Conversation Format



The Community Conversations created a safe and playful environment for people to connect, share, learn a little about Positive Psychology, and to respect and value each other's insights and experiences of wellbeing.

Attendees were asked to tell us “Something you LOVE about our community”. They were also asked to describe a PERSONAL Wellbeing Hope and a COMMUNITY Wellbeing Hope.

Each attendee was asked to select a Wellbeing Card (Michelle McQuaid resource)<sup>1</sup> and describe how the themes, ideas and tips on the card applied to their life already, or might be something they could try.

In pairs, attendees also shared stories of when they had seen our community at its best, and looked for common themes in the stories.

Attendees were also asked to provide feedback about the session and tell us if they felt more curious, willing and able to enhance wellbeing.



1. <https://www.michellemcquaid.com/>

# What we LOVE about our Community

Answers to the prompt, “Something you love about our community” were varied and grouped into themes and presented in a Word Cloud.

Given the beautiful natural landscapes throughout Break O’Day, not surprisingly ‘*enjoying nature*’, was a strong theme.

Enjoying nature can take many forms. From adventurous pursuits of hiking, surfing and mountain bike riding. To watching a sunrise or sunset, the flow of a stream or river, the drifting clouds; or walking local trails or beaches. Simply listening to the birds, or the wind rustling through the leaves, or feeling the breeze on your face are quiet ways to immerse in nature too.

Science has found a direct link between nature, wellbeing and mental health. The benefits of spending time in and interacting with nature include decreased stress, increased memory, and positive emotions. <sup>2</sup>

2. Berman, Marc G., John Jonides, and Stephen Kaplan. “The Cognitive Benefits of Interacting With Nature.” *Psychological Science* 19, no. 12 (December 2008): 1207–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x>.



# Personal Wellbeing

Wellbeing is not one-dimensional. It is made up of many different factors that overlap, interact and affect each other. There is no single measure that tells us how well a person, family, workplace, or community is doing, but several factors together give a good picture.

Professor Martin Seligman suggests that we think of measuring wellbeing like the dashboard that allows a pilot to fly a plane – there is no one dial that indicates how an airplane is functioning. Rather, the fuel gauge, the airspeed indicator, the altimeter, and the interaction of each of these combined provide all the information needed.

What matters is our ability to gather and understand the dashboard of data to help us continue learning and be intentional about the actions we take or prioritise to contribute to our wellbeing.

## Wellbeing is

“ a state in which the individual realises [their] own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to [their] community ”

World Health Organisation, 2018 <sup>3</sup>

26%

of attendees at Community Conversations reported '**Relationships**' as a personal hope for contributing to their wellbeing.

3. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>



# Individual Factors



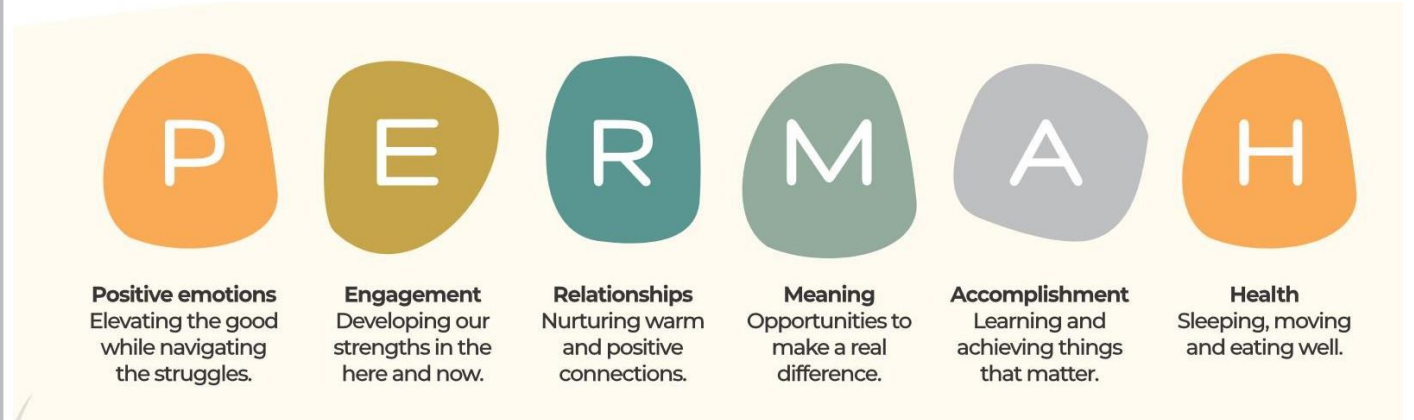
One way to understand, measure and act on evidence-based approaches for improving wellbeing is by drawing on Professor Martin Seligman's **PERMAH Framework**.

PERMAH points to six factors of feeling and functioning: **Positive Emotions**, **Engagement**, **Relationships**, **Meaning**, **Accomplishment** and **Health**.

Importantly, there is no single value for each factor or specific profile that indicates thriving.

The six factors are interconnected and influence one another. Feeling poorly in one area often results in feeling poorly in other areas as well.

Different people have different needs and capabilities and these change throughout our lives, sometimes throughout our day. For example, some days our relationships will function better than others. Some days our health is our priority and other days we need to focus our attention on other priorities.



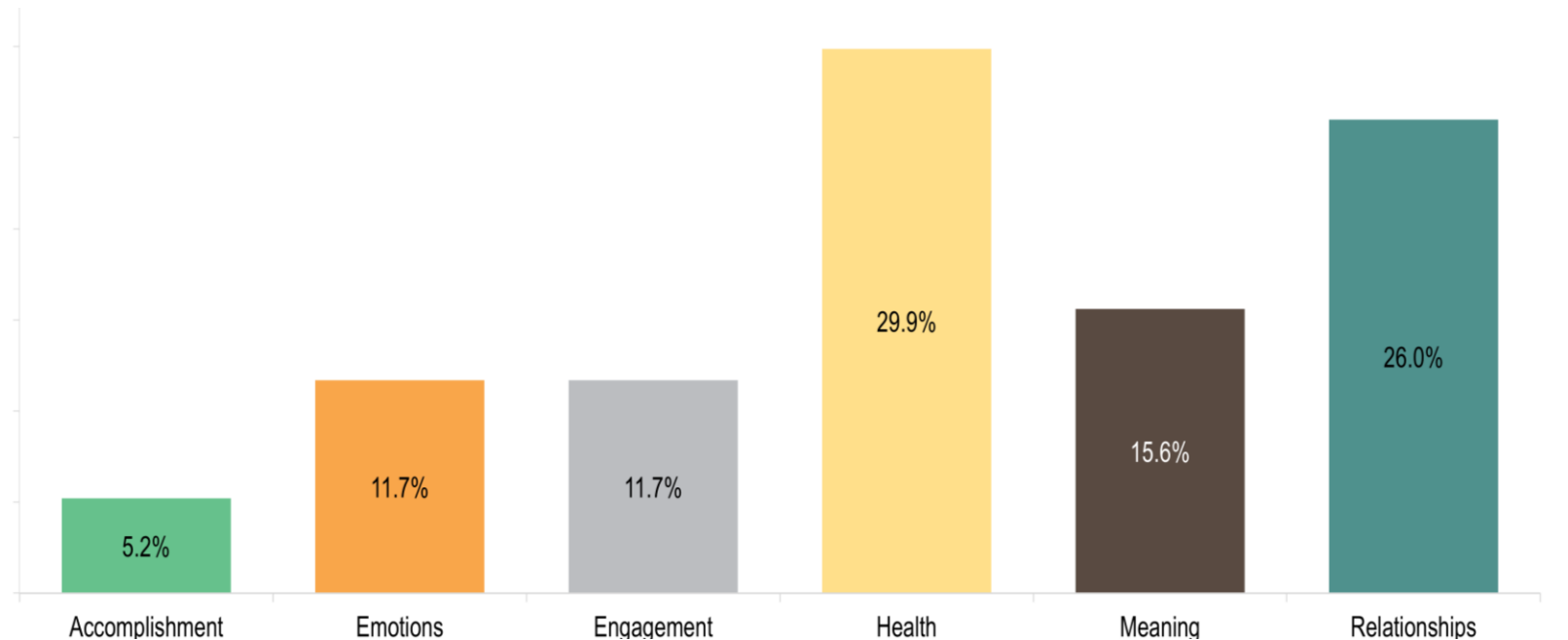
Thinking about how each of these areas of our lives are functioning gives us an opportunity to identify things we might want to improve, and then seek the knowledge or support we need to take small steps and make changes.

As we develop more skills in understanding and improving our wellbeing we get better at coping with life's ups and downs and supporting others to do the same.

# Individual Factors

Overall, people in Break O'Day report that positive **Health** and positive **Relationships** contribute the most to their personal wellbeing.

This suggests that behaviours such as being friendly and kind, supporting others, taking part in healthy activities, and enjoying a healthy lifestyle are valuable contributors to their wellbeing.



11.7%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Positive Emotion**  
is of value.

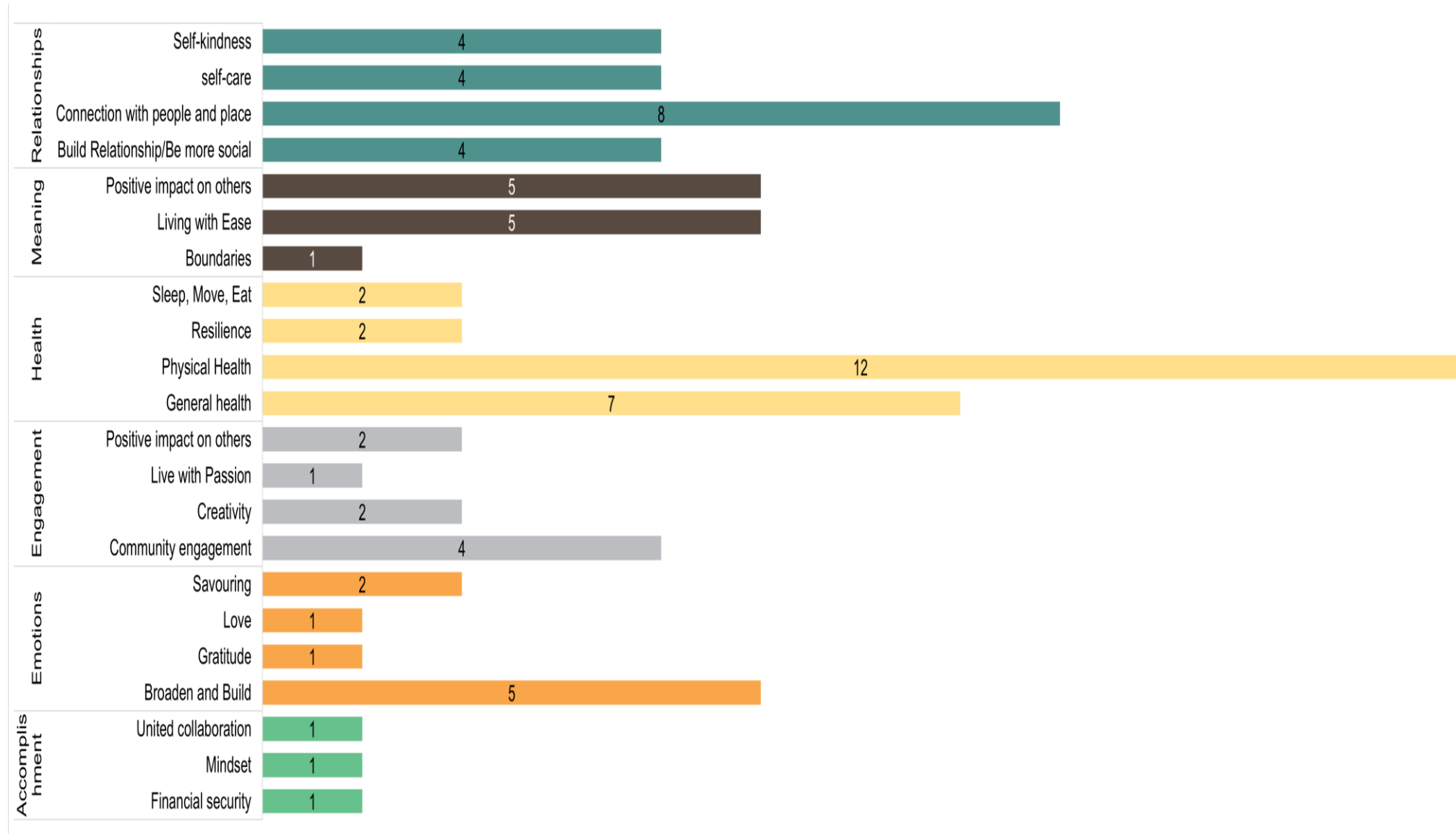
29.9 %  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Health** is of most  
value.

26%  
of attendees indicate  
that **Relationships** is  
of most value.

15.6%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Meaning** is of  
most value.

11.7%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Engagement** is of  
most value.

# Individual Factors by Activity





# Community Wellbeing

Community wellbeing is more than just the sum of how individuals within the community are feeling and functioning. Studies suggest community wellbeing is shaped by multiple interacting factors – personal, social, environmental, economic, political, and/or cultural.

Influential factors can be grouped into three separate but inter-related dimensions:

Me Level – factors internal to the individual person (e.g., personality, skills, motivation)

We Level – interpersonal factors that occur between two or more people (e.g., our interactions with and relationships with others)

Us Level – broader external factors (e.g., housing quality, education levels, access to resources)

Each of these become important areas to identify factors that support or hinder how individuals and the community on the whole, are functioning.

32.5%

of attendees at the Community Conversations reported '**Health**' as their hope and focus for supporting and building community wellbeing.

# Community Factors



Professor Seligman also suggests that the PERMAH factors can be used to provide a measure of community wellbeing.

People in Break O'Day indicated that **Health** is most important in their hopes for improving community wellbeing. They shared hopes and ideas for services and programs to support the health of those around them.

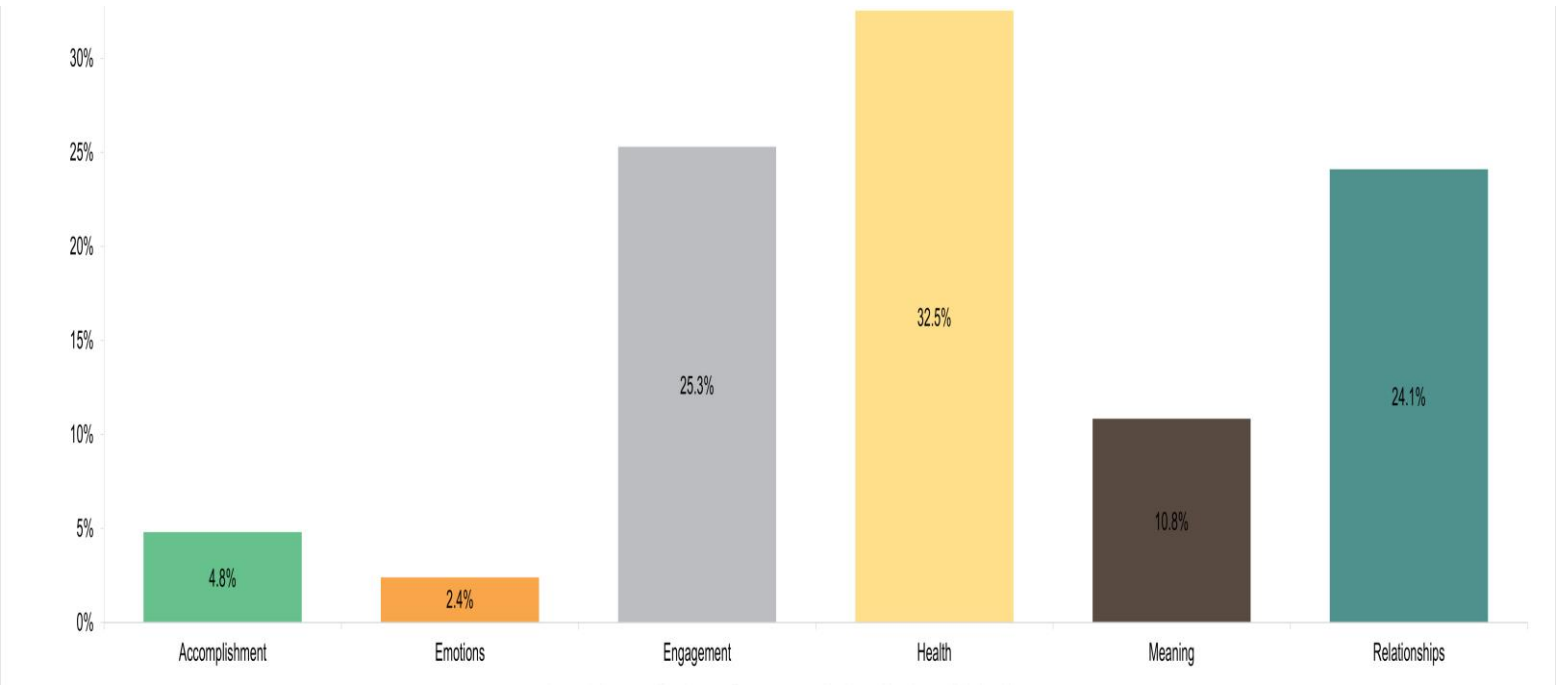
Interestingly, nearly a quarter of all attendees expressed a wellbeing hope for their community that falls under the **Engagement** factor. Suggesting they would like to see offerings and activities designed to have an impact on people's engagement with their community, and the things in life that are important to them.

Similar to individual hopes, **Relationships** are an important community wellbeing hope for nearly a quarter of all attendees. Highlighting that connecting with others is recognised as being important for our own wellbeing as individuals but also important for our wellbeing as a community.



# Community Factors

Communities are places where people engage in activities and events; create and foster connections and relationships with family, friends and those around them; find and create meaning through sense of place, spirit and purpose; accomplish things at home, work, school, and with others in their community, maintain a healthy lifestyle through access to good food and healthy activities.



25.3%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Engagement** is  
of value.

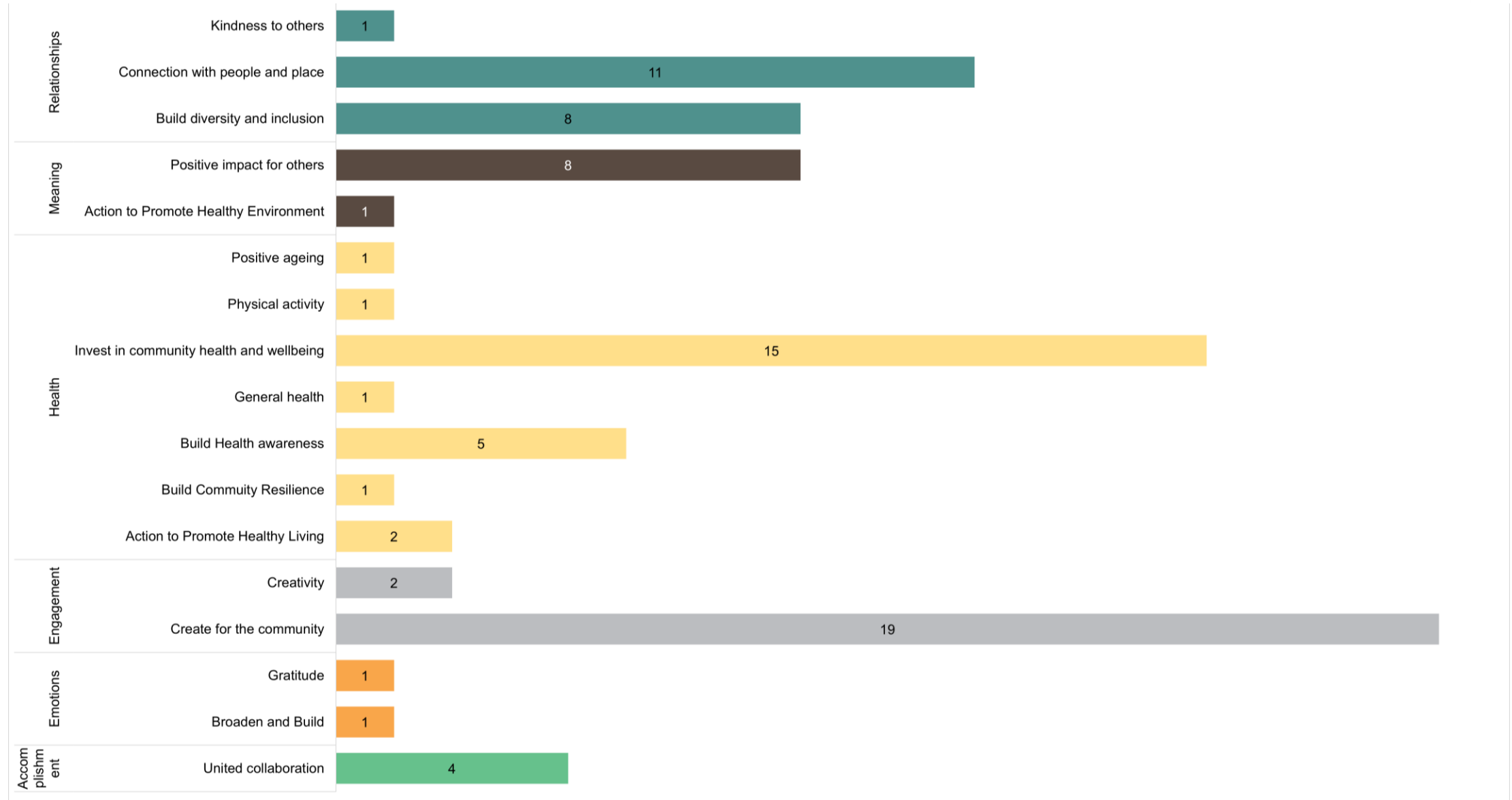
10.8 %  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Meaning** is of  
most value.

4.8%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Accomplishment** is  
of most value.

32.5%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Health** is of  
most value.

24.1%  
of attendees  
indicate that  
**Relationships** are  
of most value.

# Community Factors by Activity



# Community Conversation Feedback



92% of attendees indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of the Community Conversation.

83% are more curious about wellbeing and the Wellbeing Project.

91% felt more inspired to improve wellbeing personally and within their community.

83 %

of attendees indicate they are **more curious** about wellbeing.

91 %

of attendees indicate that they are **more inspired** to improve wellbeing.

Things you enjoyed...

“ the sense that as a community we can change ”

“ the palpable taste of excitement for the community ”

“ togetherness, being heard, like minded growing ideas ”

“ learning from other people - the way they look at things THANK YOU ”

# A Final Comment

Caring for our wellbeing is not a solo endeavour. Our wellbeing perceptions, experiences, and behaviors are diverse, and are shaped by personal factors (the Me), social factors (the We), and community aspects (the Us) that dynamically impact each other.

The common factor across these findings is our driving need as human beings for quality connections with each other and our surroundings. At the Me level, this appears in the need for and value of a sense of belonging and feeling emotionally safe. At the We level, this appears in the quality of relationships that people have with each other in the community, including their family, friends, groups, and neighbours. At the Us level, this appears in the external supports that nurture people in Break O'Day to do well. A sense of place and connection to the natural environment were also identified as important supports.

This report begins to highlight, the wellbeing factors most valued by our community members that will enable our community to flourish. To help us feel good, build warm and positive connections to each other, adapt to life's challenges, take advantage of opportunities and achieve good things for ourselves and others.

# Our Research Collaborators



Jessica Taylor is an educator, possibilitizer, presenter, and researcher who helps schools, communities, and organizations place wellbeing at the heart of their vision and practice. Jessica is the Michelle McQuaid Research Leader, and a member of the Systems Informed Positive Psychology (SIPP) and Wellbeing Literacy research team, and a teaching specialist at the University of Melbourne's Centre for Wellbeing Science. Jessica loves co-creating spaces that support individuals and communities to build awareness of the interdependent nature of wellbeing, generating wellbeing approaches that create thriving social systems. Her latest publication looks at wellbeing and resilience education during COVID. You can find more about Jessica's work at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessica-taylor-012430ab>



Leah Page is the Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator at Break O'Day Council and Project Manager for the Break O'Day Wellbeing Pilot Project. Leah is a community development practitioner with experience in health and wellbeing, collective impact, community support and advocacy, systems thinking, and fostering sustainable futures through education and research. <https://au.linkedin.com/in/leah-page-718523150>



Debbie Hindle is a Wellbeing Specialist who brings the science of wellbeing to her work with people and organisations to help make a positive difference for people and the systems they live, learn work or play in. She combines her extensive experience working with the Tasmanian community in government, education and not-for-profit career and voluntary roles, with a Masters of Positive Psychology. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/debbie-hindle-44094a32/>

