

**Well-Being Roadmap:
Promoting Resilience through a Culture of Mattering
in the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services**

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*As if in each of us
there once was a fire.
And for some of us
there seem as if there are only ashes now.
But when we dig in the ashes
we find one ember.
And very gently we fan that ember
...blow on it
...it gets brighter
and from that ember we rebuild the fire.
Only thing that's important is that ember.
That's what you and I are here to celebrate.
That though we've lived our life totally involved in the world,
we know.
We know that we're of the spirit.
The ember gets stronger.
Flame starts to flicker a bit.
And pretty soon you realize that all we're going to do for eternity,
is sit around the fire.*

Ram Dass

Abstract

The DARS Well-Being Roadmap is a multifaceted initiative to boost the well-being and resilience of staff at the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS). The program includes a research-informed workbook that guides participants through the BET I CAN (Behaviors, Emotions, Thoughts, Interactions, Context, Awareness, and Next Steps) framework and activities to facilitate personal, organizational, and social/community change. The roadmap also incorporates positive psychology interventions suitable for individual, dyadic, or team participation and includes measurement tools for evaluating progress over time. The Well-Being Roadmap offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the interplay between psychological and sociological factors that contribute to justice and flourishing in the context of government agencies.

Keywords: resilience, BET I CAN, mattering, positive psychology, well-being, government

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Introduction

The Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services ("DARS") is one of two state government agencies in Virginia, United States, that provides assistance and programs to older adults and individuals with disabilities. The agency's mission is to promote independence, choice, and community inclusion for older adults and individuals with disabilities through various services, including case management, employment assistance, and home and community-based services. DARS also oversees the state's vocational rehabilitation services, which assist individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment.

During discovery conversations with David Leon, the Director of Workforce Programs at DARS, he highlighted that "[his] hope at the end of this project is to have some type of training for managers that would incorporate positive psychology (PP) into their work to build the resiliency of [the] staff they supervise and [...] that could be utilized for all staff who lead group work with clients" (D. Leon, personal communication, February 15, 2023). In partnering with Leon and his team, our goal was to develop a program that promotes the well-being of the staff through increased resilience (Grothberg, 1996; Baruth & Carroll, 2002; Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003; Reich et al., 2010; Joyce et al., 2018; Cutuli et al., 2018; Feder et al., 2019). We define resilience as the capacity to successfully adjust to adversity, stress, or trauma without compromising the ability to function, develop, and thrive (Masten, 2015). The desire to build resilience and confidence while also inspiring the larger vision of the agency presents a unique opportunity for applying positive psychology (PP) principles to create a culture of mattering and enhanced well-being.

Sector Overview

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines disability as a condition that may affect someone's hearing, sight, cognition, or physical abilities, limiting their ability to independently perform activities of daily living (Disability and Health Overview | CDC, n.d.). The disability community is diverse, with vastly different needs that often require individualized accommodations.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) benefits programs, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs focus on promoting employment within the disability community, led by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and Social Security Administration (SSA), respectively. The VR program is a \$3 billion federal-state partnership designed to provide employment-related assistance to persons living with a disability. It delivers a wide range of services, training, education, and technologies to support them in achieving and maintaining employment. Based on national research findings, a household with one adult living with a disability requires, on average, \$18,322 more a year to obtain the same standard of living (SOL) as a household with no adult living with a disability (Morris et al., 2022). The federal poverty rate increases from 24% to 35% after adjusting for added expenses of the disability, such as assistance with daily activities, transportation, and special aid costs can add up (Mitra et al., 2017).

A 2022 Comprehensive statewide needs assessment report for the Commonwealth of Virginia reported that individuals with disabilities are a crucial source of talent for employers

(Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, 2022). The 2019 American Community Survey estimates that there are 8.3 million people in Virginia, with nearly 1 million (12.2%) self-identifying as having a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). Additionally, the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium published in 2019 states that Virginia ranks 25th among all the 50 states on the percentage of the population with disabilities actively participating in the workforce (Bonaccio et al., 2020). Individuals living with disabilities are among the few groups with the highest rates of unemployment and lowest participation in the workforce. On average, only one-in-ten adults of working age (16-64) with disabilities are actively employed (The Lewin Group et al., 2014).

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services are one of the critical programs offered by DARS. Empowering people with disabilities to improve their quality of life through meaningful employment is at the heart of the work in this sector of disability services. Engaging individuals with disabilities in meaningful employment benefits them personally by enhancing their financial, physical, and emotional well-being and reducing social isolation. Further, these programs also create inherent economic benefits for communities while helping private companies create more inclusive workplaces (The Lewin Group et al., 2014). As enrollment and costs of both SSDI and SSI have increased over the past two decades, VR Programs may also serve an essential role in reducing the number of individuals with disabilities receiving these benefits as an exclusive means of living (Dean et al., 2014).

Agency Background

DARS is the home to several divisions and programs essential to providing services to older adults and individuals with disabilities. DARS has a yearly operating budget of \$246 million and is primarily funded by the Federal government with a portion of state match, with 978 authorized Full time equivalent positions in FY 2023 (Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, 2023).

A recent study of VA DARS counselors and staff in focus groups (n=35) conducted by the Virginia Commonwealth University suggests that the key themes related to addressing the needs of the underserved and unserved populations are vocational rehabilitation services issues, employment service organization service issues, pre-employment, and transition services. The significant opportunities highlighted in the study are to increase staff knowledge and experience, reduce caseload size, implement new technology, reduce data entry requirements, and increase training to minimize staff turnover (Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, 2022). Another critical challenge is the need for more voter understanding of DARS's impact in the community. Leon stressed the need for training with an evidence-based curriculum and expanded partnerships with experts outside the agency (personal communication, February 15, 2023).

The DARS Team

The DARS team involved in this project serves many roles in supporting individuals with disabilities. They are a team of more than sixty role models, mentors, job skills coaches, vocational rehabilitation counselors, and day-to-day supporters. Their efforts empower

individuals with disabilities and encourage local businesses to partner in creating inclusive workplaces. Each team member facilitates unique and multiple components required to promote and sustain the employment of individuals with disabilities successfully. Navigating the bureaucratic requirements and following administrative protocols established by the state are core team responsibilities, which can often impact and hinder their ability to serve on the front lines. Members of the DARS team are mission-focused and value helping and nurturing others above everything while simultaneously having to overcome the many systemic barriers to working with clients with disabilities and community providers. The team also faces the challenges of balancing enormous caseloads (+100) along with managing smaller (+20) potentially eligible clients and supervising staff. With only one hundred and twenty service providers as partners to place clients with disabilities, the need for services far outweighs capacity, especially when considering the vital layer of persuasion needed for the community to support the DARS mission and vision (D. Leon, personal communication, January 23, 2023).

SOAR Analysis

The SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) framework is an effective tool for fostering strategic thinking, planning, and leadership capacity. Through a positive psychology lens, SOAR shifts the focus from people's shortcomings to their strengths and virtues. This approach emphasizes solution-based perspectives, concentrating on people's best qualities, resilience, and innovation (Cole & Stavros, 2019). Cole and Stavros (2019) suggest that SOAR begins with essential dialogue among all team or organization members and provides a structure

to assess what is working well (strengths), areas for growth (opportunities), individual and shared goals (aspirations), and success indicators (results).

Strengths: The staff at DARS is passionate and nurturing. They often have a personal connection to the disability community. As a result, they are mission-driven with a strong desire to assist their clients in working through their challenges and help improve their quality of life. Folks working at DARS have strong relationships with their clients and provider partners. Most importantly, the leadership team is committed to the growth and development of staff. For instance, they recently engaged Esher House for skills training, internal HR development, learning resilience, and group leadership development. While the team feels a sense of autonomy in how they approach their work, it is often undermined by the requirements of government regulations for data tracking and a heavy administrative burden (D. Leon, personal communication, February 15, 2023).

Opportunities: DARS team members join the agency with the desire to work directly with clients and have a positive impact on their lives. Unfortunately, due to increased government and grant requirements for reporting, they find themselves overwhelmed with paperwork. Thus, time spent working with their clients becomes scarce. Staff feels overworked at times, and, as a result, they pass on opportunities to engage in training and development. In addition, the agency has a limited budget and struggles to offer competitive compensation in the local market, often losing candidates to other agencies or the private sector. DARS staff also believe there are opportunities to improve communication with providers, clients, and counselors. While internally the agency

recognizes the importance and impact of their work with clients, communicating this more compellingly to business partners and statewide workers would be incredibly beneficial. There is also an excellent opportunity to promote connections within internal staff to break internal organizational silos. The team wants its focus to increasingly be on helping clients feel confident about obtaining permanent jobs and moving away from dependence on SSI and SSDI. While the agency highlights the benefits of what working with their clients brings to providers, they need more services than providers can currently offer (D. Leon, personal communication, January 23, 2023).

Aspirations: DARS leadership hopes to continue capitalizing on its staff's passion by, for example, continuing to share stories of success with clients and partners to build morale and confidence. Leadership is committed to ensuring that the team has time availability to engage with internal development opportunities. Moreover, they stress the importance of continuous learning and development by highlighting that this is expected, necessary, and valued within the agency. The aspiration is that a more engaged staff will also positively impact the client experience. This would further build the possibility of more successful client outcomes and incentivize the clients to value working rather than relying on SSI benefits (D. Leon, personal communication, January 23, 2023).

Results: Measures of success for the DARS agency include but are not limited to:

- The team experiences greater overall well-being at work with increased positive emotions, and reduced negative emotions, increased engagement, positive relationships,

meaning, and accomplishment in addition to overall health measured by The Workplace PERMA Profiler (Hone et al., 2014).

- The team empowers their clients to feel confident in securing employment and have overall positive life satisfaction including their goals, achievements, and life circumstances measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener & Emmons, 1985).
- The team experiences increased self-efficacy or optimistic self-belief, the belief that a person can perform new or challenging tasks, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning through the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).
- The team engages and utilizes development opportunities as measured by the number of extra-curricular events and attendance/participation.
- The team successfully increases the year-over-year number of community partners as providers for their clients.
- The team develops new positive habits that stick.
- The team experiences increased resilience.

Approach

The roadmap begins with the history of PP, which is supported by over two decades of empirical evidence, to set the stage for the launch of the practical component of the curriculum. This module aims to win the hearts and minds of participants. The former is possible through storytelling, for which Seligman (2018), Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2014), Joseph (2015),

and Lyubomirsky (2008) offer plenty of valuable examples. For the latter, we leverage the extensive empirical research conducted in the field since its inception, like Lyubomirsky et al.'s (2005) cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental meta-analysis, which argues that not only does achieving success bring about happiness but also having a positive outlook and experiencing positive emotions can lead to increased success.

As part of this introduction to PP, we include simple definitions of the theories and concepts described herein while drawing from Seligman's (2018) PERMA (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment) model of well-being. We also discuss the importance of *protective factors* (Cutuli et al., 2018) in developing and maintaining resilience and separate them into four categories:

- Physical and biological factors that support an individual's ability to cope with and recover from stressors, such as genetics (Feder et al., 2019), plasticity (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2003), and physical fitness (Southwick & Charney, 2012).
- Cognitive and emotional traits or characteristics that promote the ability to overcome adversity. For example, optimism (Southwick & Charney, 2012), emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2016), self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978), meaning-making (Rutter, 2012), altruism, and humor (Vaillant, 2012).
- Factors of resilience that help individuals build a sense of belonging, encourage social support, and provide resources that can help them successfully confront challenges,

including family relationships (Luthar et al., 2015), role models (Southwick & Charney, 2012), caregivers (Sameroff, 2010), and team sports or hobbies (Werner, 1995).

- Institutions, organizations, and other elements outside the self or personal relationships provide spaces conducive to developing and maintaining resiliency. For instance, positive organizations (Cooperrider et al., 2017; White & Murray, 2015), religion (Walsh, 1999), access to green spaces (Kabisch et al., 2017), healthcare, and social services (Ungar, 2013).

Creating a Culture of Mattering

DARS leadership seeks to build resilience, confidence, and competence within the team while inspiring the achievement of the agency's vision. Studies suggest prioritizing well-being reduces turnover rates and improves performance (Page et al., 2009). We believe this presents an opportunity for applying PP principles to create a culture of mattering founded on the notion of feeling valued and adding value (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021). Given that the DARS team is responsible for leading without institutional authority, the culture we help create can impact how teams engage, produce, and care for their own and each other's well-being.

In the DARS organizational context, fostering a supportive and empowering environment that enables staff members to effectively collaborate and communicate, despite the absence of traditional hierarchical structures is crucial. The culture crafted by and for the DARS team can directly impact team dynamics and overall productivity. A positive and inclusive culture can promote open communication, constructive feedback, and a sense of camaraderie among team

members. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of engagement, satisfaction, and commitment to the organization's goals. Furthermore, a positive work culture can also contribute to the psychological well-being of employees by encouraging self-care, work-life balance, and mutual support among team members. This is particularly relevant for the DARS team, as their responsibilities often involve addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, which can be emotionally demanding.

By nurturing a culture that prioritizes the well-being of its staff, the DARS team can create a resilient workforce. *Culture* is a set of shared beliefs and practices that guide a team's work (Prilleltensky et al., 2020). *Mattering*, foundational for positive cultures, is fundamentally linked to the idea that every person counts and is essential (Prilleltensky, 2014). Employees may feel valued by their colleagues yet lack opportunities to find meaning in their work. On the other hand, every interaction with clients has a profound purpose when trying to align their goals with those of a community partner. Sadly, sometimes due to bureaucratic challenges and timing, a Rehabilitation Counselor may not witness the impact of their efforts to feel like the work matters (D. Leon, personal communication, January 23, 2023).

Adding value and *being valued* are interdependent components of mattering that allow for what Prilleltensky (2014) calls *meaning-making*, a reprisal or understanding of life events. Both are rooted in two crucial moments: recognition (our presence matters) and impact (we are making a difference) (Prilleltensky, 2014). Mattering is cyclical and can lead us down a path of feeling "good" (valued by others) or "bad" (devalued by others). At DARS, it is vital for team

members to feel appreciated because it can lead to greater levels of self-confidence and competence. A life of sacrifice in service to others without appreciation is frustrating and unsustainable (Prilleltensky, 2014). The satisfaction of knowing that their actions positively impacted their client gives their work a greater sense of meaning (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021). Thus, mattering as a foundational pillar of culture within DARS is achievable through actions, skills, and practices that balance the team's and clients' well-being.

Teaming is helpful to create conditions within DARS where everyone feels valued, encompassing key elements: *behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and interactions* (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021). Raising awareness, setting behavioral goals, addressing contextual cues (i.e., building trust), and interacting in affirming ways are essential drivers of change. Strong connections are foundational as we train the DARS team on mattering, enabling each member to feel valued, appreciated, and respected (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2021).

These elements of teaming are all part of Prilleltensky's (2020) **BET I CAN (Behaviors, Emotions, Thoughts, Interactions, Context, Awareness, and Next Steps)** model, a comprehensive framework designed to enhance well-being and resilience at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The model is an acronym for seven key components that interact to promote a flourishing life:

- **Behaviors** are actions and habits that contribute to well-being, such as exercise, healthy eating, and engaging in meaningful activities. Fostering positive behaviors can lead to improved physical and mental health.

- **Emotions** play a crucial role in well-being, and understanding how to manage them effectively is essential. The model encourages cultivating positive emotions and developing emotional intelligence to navigate life's challenges better.
- Our **thought** patterns significantly impact our overall well-being. The BET I CAN model emphasizes cultivating a growth mindset, challenging negative thoughts, and fostering self-compassion to improve mental health.
- Healthy **interactions** and social connections are vital for well-being. The model promotes effective communication, empathy, and conflict resolution to strengthen interpersonal relationships and create supportive social networks.
- Through **context**, the model acknowledges the influence of environmental factors on well-being. Individuals and communities can create more inclusive and supportive environments that promote overall health by identifying and addressing contextual barriers.
- **Awareness** and mindfulness help individuals recognize their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and understand their impact on well-being. This awareness can lead to more intentional choices that support personal growth and flourishing.
- And finally, the **next steps** component encourages individuals to set realistic goals, develop action plans, and engage in continuous reflection and growth to enhance their well-being and resilience over time.

For example, verbal expressions of appreciation are a simple way to begin laying the foundation of respect that promotes strong **interactions** and buffers the **emotional** effects of adversity within day-to-day experiences (Hassan, 2013). **Contextually**, perceptions of procedural (e.g., policies) or distributive (e.g., allocation of resources and rewards) fairness can affect the behaviors and thoughts of the team. Thus, the BET I CAN model is an integral part of our roadmap to creating a culture of mattering. The meaning derived from these efforts positions each team member as an essential agent of change, transforming the agency's culture to one that is enriching, positive, and encouraging (Prilleltensky et al., 2020).

Fostering Team Engagement Using High Quality Connections

DARS seeks to develop a positive work environment where day-to-day challenges (e.g., bureaucratic requirements, reporting structures, limited resources, administrative tasks, client fears, and expectations) are met with strong individual and team resilience. The goal is to absorb the impact of everyday adversities and convert the challenges into opportunities to learn, grow, and emerge stronger (Stephens et al., n.d). Research suggests that Emotional Carrying Capacity (ECC), the constructive expression of positive and negative emotions, is directly correlated with higher-quality connections that become a source of individual and team resilience (Stephens et al., n.d.). Thus, an organization's ability to build or strengthen resilience rests on high-quality relationships.

High Quality Connections (HQCs) describe short-term, dyadic, positive interactions at work that breed positive relationships (Stephens et al., 2013). Important HQC examples include

respectful engagement (showing others they are valued), task-enabling (aiding someone who is facing a challenge that you previously faced), trusting (showing vulnerability and authenticity, relying on others), and playing (injecting moments of fun and joy into work). These interactions build a safe place for expressing both positive (e.g., securing a new job placement site) and negative (e.g., frustrations with a client that has relapsed and is restarting the placement process) emotions (Dutton, 2003). HQCs can be fostered by something as simple as Business Development Managers and Rehabilitation Counselors pairing up to strengthen the team. On any one day, one person can uplift the other.

Our goal is to support the continued development of a culture that nourishes DARS team members so that the positive impact extends to their clients. We focus on three significant pathways through which HQCs are built and strengthened: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Stephens et al., 2012). At the core is the power of values and behaviors that create HQCs (Dutton, 2003).

DARS Values are **accountability** (taking responsibility), **innovation** (forward, creative thinking), **customer service** (respectful attention to clients' needs), **engagement** (committed to the agency's mission), and **diversity, equity, and inclusion** (Leon, D., personal communication, January 23, 2023). Additionally, studies suggest using a few fundamental values when seeking to energize work environments through HQCs: **teamwork** (collective responsibility and action directed towards learning while supporting each other), **professional development** (personal growth is encouraged), **whole-person approach** (honoring life commitments while encouraging

conversations regarding life, health, and well-being), and **respect and dignity for others** (mutual respect where each person is valued for their contribution) (Dutton, 2003).

Coordinated actions and activities with these values in mind ensure the culture accurately represents how DARS wants to operate in service of the agency's mission. Facilitating and supporting team learning by encouraging structures and processes that foster HQCs begins with assessing areas that will bolster resilience (Carmeli et al., 2009) —for instance, using listening as a critical mechanism for creating positive relational experiences that allow leaders to co-create opportunities for HQCs. The focus on "being" versus "doing" also leads to HQCs that build resilience within a team (Hinz et al., 2021).

Make it Stick: Peer-to-Peer Training & Role Modeling

We recommend a process-based approach to train those who volunteer and choose to carry the torch of this work. Importantly, these champions of change must recognize what falls within their purview, what is beyond their expertise, and what needs to be referred to the appropriate mental health support services. These internal champions need not be technical experts. They merely demonstrate a strong understanding of the workshop material, have basic skills and confidence in facilitating the material, and embody the work and practice of the presented concepts.

Empirical evidence suggests that the most effective way to transfer knowledge is to expose trainees to negative and positive behavior models. Incorporating trainee-generated scenarios and setting clear, measurable goals is recommended to make this process more effective.

Furthermore, champions can be encouraged to use rewards and positive reinforcement to promote specific behaviors in the work environment (Taylor et al., 2005). With this in mind, we propose that leaders who become familiar with the interventions outlined in the proposed roadmap and offer opportunities to other DARS employees and stakeholders to participate in group-setting reviews underpinned by a learning mindset.

In addition, we propose harnessing the power of role models to increase motivation, reinforce existing goals, and facilitate the adoption of new behaviors. Morgenroth et al. (2015) suggest that role models play three distinct functions: acting as behavioral examples, representing the possible, and being inspirational. Thus, to improve the attainment of organizational and personal goals, formal and informal leaders across DARS can utilize modeling by paying attention and explicitly highlighting day-to-day behaviors (Manz & Sims, 1981). This can then extend into more formal peer-to-peer support and learning workshops led by DARS leadership, who have been through the program, experienced the impact of their anticipated changes in behavior, and wish to extend the work into other areas of the organization.

Methods & Measures

The program will commence with pre-assessments. After each section of the roadmap, participants can retake the assessments. A custom program evaluation survey and the below-described measures will be administered to obtain program feedback and individual participant outcomes. Outcome measures will focus on workplace well-being, satisfaction with life score, and self-efficacy.

Workplace PERMA Profiler (WPP). A self-report measure that assesses the five pillars of PERMA: positive and negative emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, in addition to overall health. Participants are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with 23 items on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from "completely agree" to "not at all" (Hone et al., 2014).

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). A self-report measure that assesses an individual's overall life satisfaction. The SWLS comprises five statements that capture an individual's global life assessment, including their goals, achievements, and life circumstances. Participants are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (Diener & Emmons, 1985).

Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES). A self-report measure that assesses one's perceived self-efficacy or optimistic self-belief, the belief that a person can perform new or challenging tasks or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Participants are asked to rate (10-item scale) the extent to which they have successful coping and a stable internal attribution of success on a Likert scale ranging from "exactly true to not at all true."

Summary & Limitations

Our comprehensive roadmap is designed to meet the DARS team's current needs while supporting them in achieving future goals. The program consists of interventions that build on each other. We recommend that DARS engage with the content in the order proposed, even though alternating is also possible. These roadmap activities include recommended assessments, opportunities for discussion, and fieldwork to facilitate effective behavior change. The program's success relies on team members' commitment and mutual accountability in implementing practices that support the content from one activity to the next.

The program's second phase involves extending the content to other areas, such as district offices. DARS leadership team members who have completed the content will take on the training role via the peer-to-peer training model. We aim to equip DARS with sustainable tools to implement actionable PP activities that promote resilience and well-being.

The third and final phase includes recommended ideas for growth beyond the program. For instance, DARS leadership can offer to enact procedures for acting on the information revealed throughout the process to ensure staff buy-in and the long-term sustainability of the newly implemented practices within the DARS team.

Although the proposed interventions are evidence-based and -informed, there is limited research on PP applications in government settings, particularly in the United States. Therefore, the generalization of findings is challenging, and application results cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, we were unfamiliar with all team members as we worked directly with senior management and, even then, were not exposed to everyone's specific situation. There may also

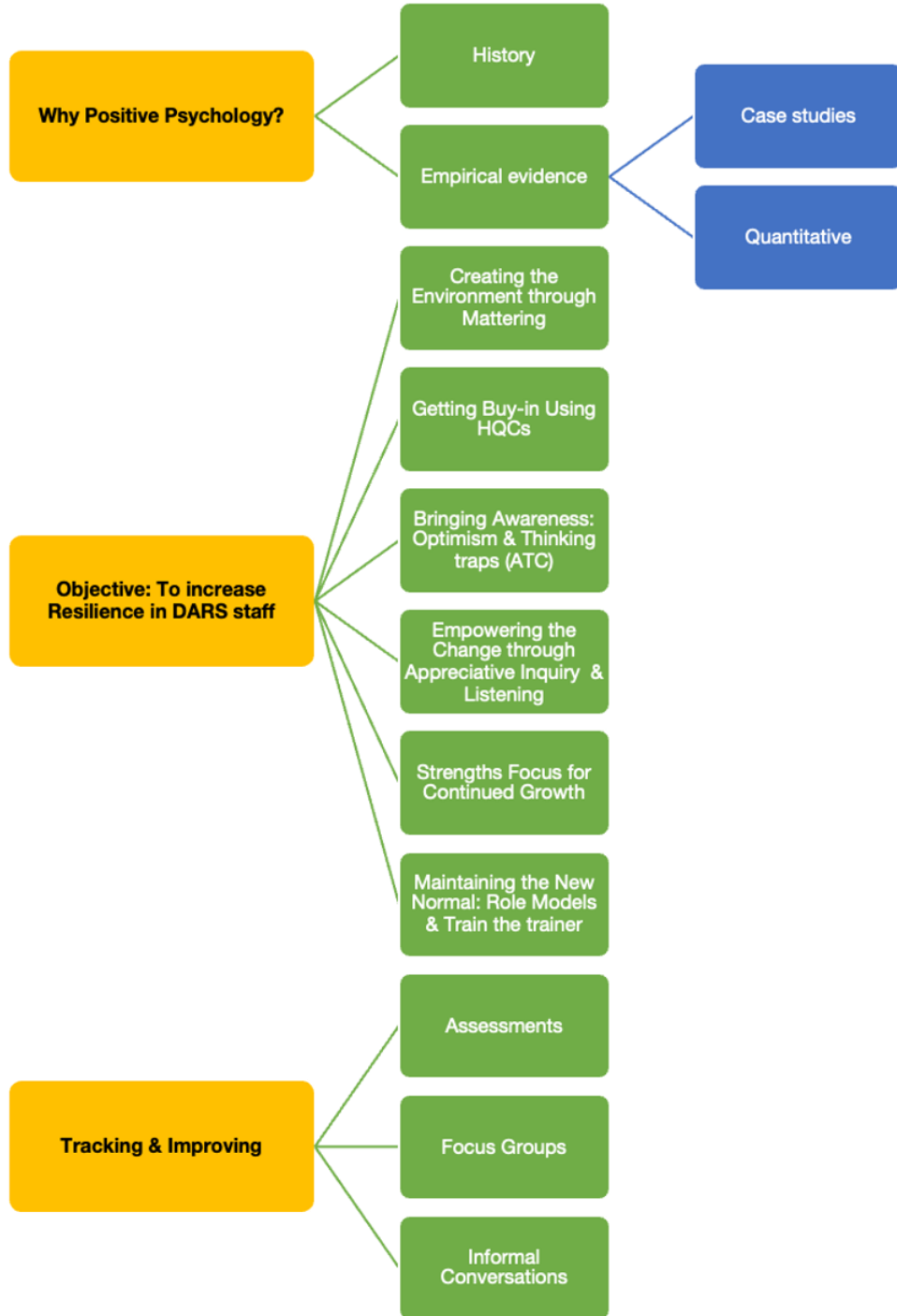
be constraints due to person-activity fit (Schueller, 2014), as not all proposed PPIs will have the same impact on different people. Arguably, some of these interventions may not have the intended effect. We recommend taking a curious approach and using the proposed assessments to test the effectiveness of the proposed interventions.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Application Plan Framework

We designed an evidence-based program to support DARS's leadership by integrating positive psychology principles, practices, and interventions. Our phased approach includes three sections: (1) Why is Positive Psychology (PP) a Useful Tool for Increasing Resilience? (2) Increasing Resilience in DARS Staff Through Evidence-Based and Research-Informed Interventions, and (3) Measuring Outcomes to Increase Program Efficacy. We focus our phased approach on recommending specific positive psychology interventions (PPI) and proposing validated and reliable psychometric assessments and measurements to evaluate the program's overall impact on participants' well-being over time. Mindful that every person is different, in the program design, we also utilized a variety of components to ensure person-activity fit (Schueller, 2014). We propose that each PPI, regardless of the order in which it is implemented, builds off the other and, at the same time, serves as scaffolding for the latter. There is no timeframe for these interventions, though we recommend building momentum by implementing these over one year or less. We hope this work will indirectly impact DARS's clients. However, the scope of our proposed PPIs is explicitly designed for DARS employees.

Diagram 1: Comprehensive Program Overview & Framework



Appendix 2: Culture of Mattering

Mattering is foundational in the BET I CAN model because it represents the notion that every individual is significant and indispensable. It consists of two interrelated aspects, adding value and being valued, which facilitate the process of meaning-making, or interpreting daily occurrences (Prilleltensky, 2014). These aspects stem from two critical moments: recognition (our presence is important) and impact (we are effecting change) (Prilleltensky, 2014). Mattering operates cyclically, leading to feelings of being "good" (appreciated by others) or "bad" (disregarded by others). A culture that embraces mattering influences how team members interact, perform, and attend to their own and each other's well-being.

Diagram 2: The Mattering Wheel



Appendix 3: BET I CAN

To understand and promote mattering at DARS, we propose using the evidenced-based BET I CAN intervention model, which focuses on driving change within the culture. BET I CAN skills can improve well-being, focusing specifically on behaviors, emotions, thoughts, and interactions. DARS leadership can leverage the BET I CAN model as its PP foundation to set an agency goal of creating a mattering culture. Diagram 3 outlines the steps of the BET I CAN model (Prilleltensky, 2021).

Diagram 3: BET I CAN Model

<p>Behaviors</p>	<p>Trust within the agency is established through actions rather than mere thoughts. Begin by setting goals clarifying DARS's shared purpose, values, leadership expectations, and service standards. Next, determine how the leadership team can ensure that employees feel valued in their work. Additionally, engage in one-on-one meetings with each team member, posing the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What can I do to feel valued at work? 2. What can I do to help others feel valued at work? 3. What are the top three values that guide your life?
<p>Emotions</p>	<p>Mindfulness contributes to emotional regulation. To support each team member, incorporate mindfulness breaks into the organizational</p>

	<p>culture, such as practicing "Stop, Breathe, Be" or the "10 Breaths Practice." Furthermore, focusing on rewards, recognition, optimism, and strengths will foster the development of positive emotions within the team.</p>
Thoughts	<p>Employing the ABC/ATC Model will serve as an effective strategy to counteract negative assumptions and previously mentioned thinking traps.</p>
Interactions	<p>Connect and Communicate. Feeling valued and contributing value is intrinsically linked to relationships with others. Emphasize high-quality connections and incorporate skillful feedback in a quarterly review process for all DARS team members by utilizing the "what, when, where, and how" framework introduced in the roadmap.</p>
Context	<p>Read the cues and change the cues within the DARS environment, to support changes in behavior being initiated.</p>
Awareness	<p>Develop self-awareness by understanding your values and needs for wellness while also recognizing external factors beyond the control of the DARS team, such as hierarchy, pay rate, and documentation requirements.</p>

<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>Make a Plan. Make it Stick. Using the GREASE Method to ensure changes within the culture are sustainable: Gradual, Rewarded, Easy, Alternatives, Supported, and Educated.</p>
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Appendix 4: High-Quality Connections

The ability to build or strengthen resilience within the agency rests on the foundation of high-quality relationships (Stephens et al., n.d). High-quality connections (HQC) describe short-term, dyadic, positive interactions at work that breed positive relationships through four key pathways: respectful engagement, task-enabling, trusting, and injecting play (Dutton, 2003).

Diagram 4: High-Quality Connections Pathways



To create HQCs is to treat every interaction like a learning opportunity. How the DARS leadership team designs and runs daily routines offers a chance to develop new communication and connection habits. Being open to learning and approaching conversations with curiosity instead of judgment will help foster meaningful relationships that have long-lasting, positive effects on each team member's well-being and will inevitably spill over into connections with clients. The goal is for everyone to leave interactions feeling a sense of vitality (e.g., energized by the connection), positive regard (e.g., feeling respected and valued), and a sense of mutuality, vulnerability, and responsiveness, which allows each person to experience the engagement fully (Dutton, 2003). In successfully implementing these rules of engagement, we anticipate that individual team members will feel more satisfied, committed, and attached to the agency. Moreover, the entire staff will experience greater learning and creativity, allowing for more flexibility and adaptability in facing challenges (Leon, D., personal communication January 23, 2023). DARS will benefit from an increased capacity for cooperation and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.

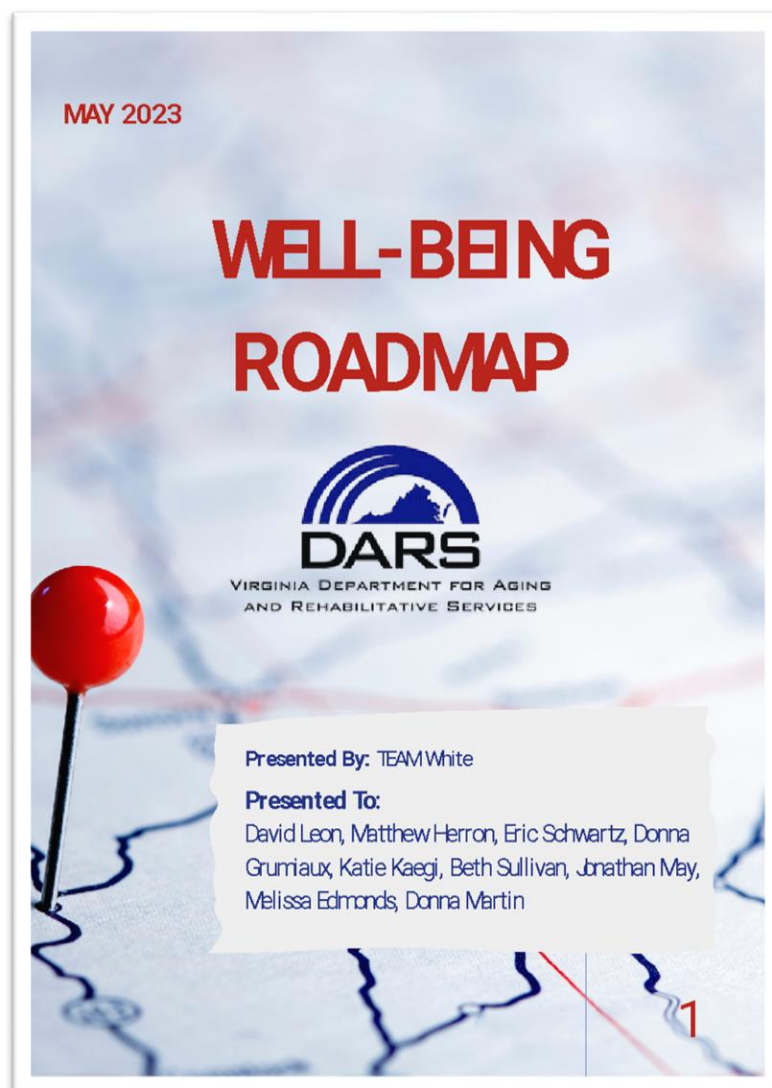
Diagram 5: Four Pathways to High-Quality Connections

<p>Help/Task Enabling</p>	<p>Potential avenues for professional growth include assisting or enabling others to excel in their roles, sharing resources and responsibilities, and engaging in actions that benefit others. As a leadership team, consider ways to acknowledge accomplishments and foster peer recognition by highlighting individual strengths. Solicit feedback, inquire about the needs of others, and provide support accordingly. Minimize micromanagement and prioritize follow-through on commitments, fostering mutual accountability within the team. Whenever feasible, delegate tasks and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Trust</p>	<p>Communicate confidence in others by expressing your belief in their ability to meet expectations and demonstrate reliability. Be open to vulnerability when suitable, and approach conversations without prejudice. This necessitates previously mentioned mindfulness techniques to maintain composure and openness, employing curiosity for enhanced clarity and comprehension. A suggested strategy involves peer-to-peer pairings between managers and rehabilitation counselors.</p>

<p>Respect</p>	<p>Cultivate presence by interacting with others to convey appreciation and value. This entails being fully present, demonstrating empathy, and practicing active listening. Eliminate distractions while conversing to maintain attentive listening. Establish guidelines for engagement during meetings, such as prohibiting the use of mobile phones or encouraging camera use.</p>
<p>Play</p>	<p>Promote playfulness to stimulate innovation and creativity. The quality of our relationships can either energize or deplete us. Reflect on how you present yourself at work, even in virtual settings.</p> <p>Individually, consider engaging in high-quality daily interactions with a colleague or friend, recognizing their character strengths, sharing resources, and exercising gratitude and kindness. As a team, explore how often you can come together for fun, lighthearted activities without set agendas.</p>

Appendix 5: Application Plan or Roadmap

The attached roadmap, inspired by the BET I CAN framework and the concepts discussed in this document, is a powerful resource designed to help you enhance mental health and resilience. The proposed activities are designed to further support DARS's mission through specific, evidence-informed positive psychology interventions. The full file can be accessed [here](#).



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