

WELL-BEING EXPERIMENT CARDS®

COMPANION GUIDE

CREATED BY CARA L. SIDMAN, PHD

Dr. SidZ Studio
Pause Into Life

WELL-BEING EXPERIMENT CARDS®

COMPANION GUIDE

A supplemental card resource to support exploration, experimentation, planning, and facilitation.



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Table of Contents

05 · Welcome

06 · Quick Start

07 · Inside the Deck

08 · Inside the Cards

09 · Why Tiny, Playful Experiments?

10 · Using the Deck

11 · The Experiment Process

12 · The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey

13 · Four-Week Experiment Schedule

14 · Making Experimentation a Practice

15 · More Ways to Play with the Cards

16 · Facilitating Groups

17 · Using the Cards Across Professional Settings

18 · The Science Behind the Cards

19 · Research & References

20 · FAQs

21 · FAQs cont'd

22 · A Final Note from Dr. SidZ

23 · About Dr. SidZ

24 · About Dr. SidZ Studio

25 · Appendix A: Complete Card Index

26 · Appendix B: Discussion Questions

27 · Appendix C: Self-Care & Professional Disclaimer

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PLAY

THE EXPERIMENT ITSELF IS THE LEARNING















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Welcome

Welcome to your Companion Guide for the Well-Being Experiment Cards®. Whether you're exploring the cards on your own or planning and facilitating experiences as an educator or practitioner, this guide offers additional context and support as you explore tiny, playful experiments in everyday life.

Many of us have come to think of well-being as another thing to add to our already busy days–a program to follow, a habit to build, or one more task to check off the list.

The Well-Being Experiment Cards offer a different approach, making well-being a part of everyday life.

These science-based daily experiments invite playful new ways of engaging with life by distilling decades of research into micro-practices–including mindset shifts, moments of reflection, and tiny actions for noticing, connecting, playing, and exploring.

Well-being is a set of trainable skills that can be practiced in everyday life.

Like any skill, repeated practice helps strengthen patterns of thinking and behavior through neuroplasticity–the brain's remarkable ability to adapt and rewire through experience.

Each card translates research from psychology, neuroscience, behavior change, social-emotional learning, environmental design, and well-being science into a simple, real-world experience.

Organized around the four pillars of well-being from the Healthy Minds Framework (Dahl et al., 2020), the 52-card deck includes 13 experiments within each pillar:

Awareness	Observe your mind, body, and the world around you to be in the moment
Connection	Share gratitude, kindness, and play to nurture belonging
Insight	Get curious about your inner world to discover fresh perspectives
Purpose	Explore values and motivations to guide intentional actions

Let your curiosity lead the way.
Stay open to surprise. Notice what unfolds.

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QUICK START

New to the cards?

Start with Inside the Deck

Ready to experiment?

Go to Using the Deck

Want to use the cards with a class or group?

Go to Facilitating Groups &
Appendix B: Discussion Questions

Have a question?

Visit the FAQs

Curious about the science?

Explore The Science Behind the Cards

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Inside the Deck

52 cards · 4 pillars · 13 cards per pillar
156 Tiny Daily Experiments

AWARENESS

OBSERVE YOUR MIND, BODY, AND THE WORLD AROUND YOU TO BE IN THE MOMENT

CONNECTION

SHARE GRATITUDE, KINDNESS, AND PLAY TO NURTURE BELONGING

INSIGHT

GET CURIOUS ABOUT YOUR INNER WORLD TO DISCOVER FRESH PERSPECTIVES

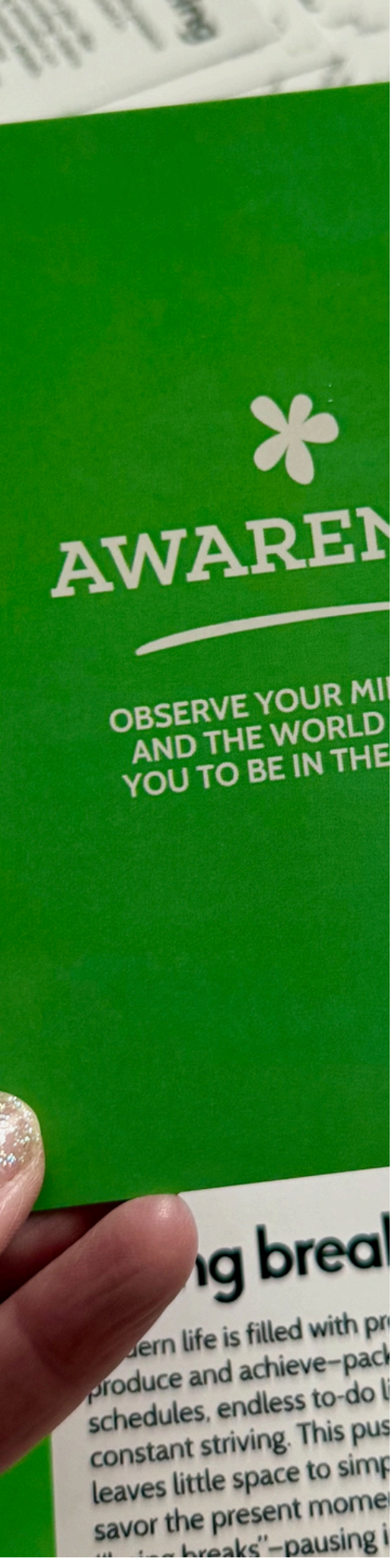
PURPOSE

EXPLORE VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS TO GUIDE INTENTIONAL ACTIONS



See Appendix A for a complete 52-card index.

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Inside the Cards

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® are a science-based deck of 52 uniquely playful experiments organized around four trainable well-being skills from the Healthy Minds Framework.

Each card pairs a brief science explanation with three independent experiment levels, offering choice in how to bring the practice into everyday life.

Across the deck, 156 micropractices bring the science to life through a wide range of experiences–including mindset shifts, moments of reflection, and playful actions.

AWARENESS

being breaks

Modern life is filled with pressure to produce and achieve–packed schedules, endless to-do lists, and constant striving. This push for "doing" leaves little space to simply be and savor the present moment. Taking "being breaks"–pausing in stillness to do nothing–lets the quiet reconnect us with the here and now, nurturing mental clarity, emotional awareness, and a deeper sense of calm.

LEVEL 1 Take one 30-second being break at a natural transition.

LEVEL 2 Take two 60-second being breaks at natural transitions.

LEVEL 3 Take three 60-second being breaks at natural transitions.

A-01

Experiment Name

A playful name that captures the essence of the experiment.

Science Behind the Experiment

The science behind how the experiment supports the pillar skill.

3 Independent Levels

Each level increases the degree of stretch, while remaining a tiny, independent practice.

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Why Tiny, Playful Experiments?

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® draw on decades of multidisciplinary research, integrating insights from well-being science, psychology, neuroscience, social-emotional and experiential learning, curiosity, environmental design, and motivation.

Together, this body of literature supports tiny, playful experiments as an accessible, engaging, and motivating way to practice well-being in everyday life.

The cards are guided by these evidence-based principles:

- **Well-being is trainable.** Like any skill, it develops through intentional practice over time.
- **Tiny makes it possible.** Micropractices are easier to begin, repeat, and weave into daily life.
- **Play unlocks curiosity.** Play invites creativity, flexibility, and openness while easing pressure.
- **Experiments turn practice into discovery.** Exploring a variety of practices creates opportunities to notice what happens, discover what resonates, and learn through experience.
- **Choice fuels engagement.** Autonomy supports intrinsic motivation and a sense of ownership.
- **Everyday practice makes it real.** Practicing in the moments and contexts of daily life makes well-being something you experience, not something separate you have to do.

See Research & References page for supporting research.



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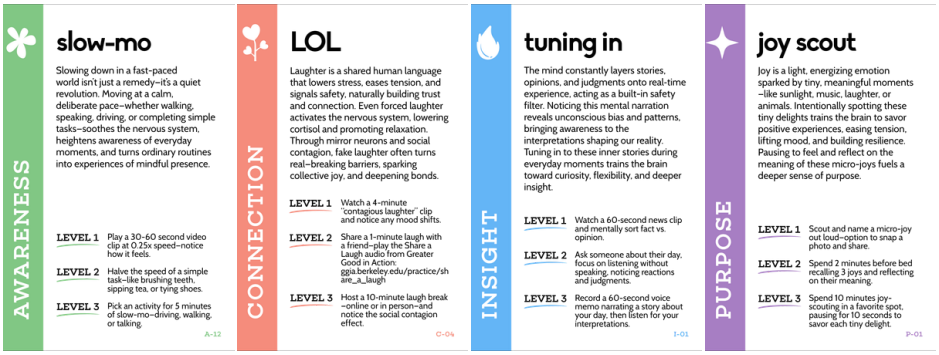
Using the Deck

The following guidelines are research-based recommendations to help you get the most from using the Well-Being Experiment Cards®.

Browse the Cards

Scan through the cards to get a feel for the deck before choosing your first experiment.

Notice which ones spark your curiosity, meet a need, or areas you want to develop.



Choose Your Card

Although there is no one way to use the cards, the recommendation is to select a mixture of intentional and random cards to help you discover both the skills that come naturally to you and the ones that provide a gentle stretch outside your comfort zone and spark a little surprise.

Intentional Card Selection

When choosing intentionally, consider:

- Which cards spark your curiosity most
- Skills you'd like to explore or strengthen
- Your energy and availability
- The experiment setting or context
- Other people involved
- Advance planning

Random Card Selection

Random selection invites surprise, novelty, and play while helping you discover experiments you might not have chosen on your own.

Picking a card randomly without printing?
The Card PDF Download contains instructions on using an online randomizer.

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The Experiment Process

Choose Your Level

Each card contains three independent levels, meaning you can begin with any level at any time. Choose the level that best fits your needs, one that feels both realistic and gently challenging.

Level 1

A light practice.

Level 2

A realistic stretch.

Level 3

An expanded practice (still tiny).

Experiment

Reread the science behind the experiment for inspiration that day. Set a simple, compassionate intention for what you hope to explore, learn, or contribute, for yourself or others. Then follow the practice instructions. Keep your card visible as a cue to return to your experiment throughout the day.

Capture Field Notes

During and after the experiment, capture brief Field Notes about what you notice in your body, heart, and mind.

Reflect

Later that day, reflect on your experience using your Field Notes as a starting point. Consider what stands out, questions that arise, obstacles or resistance you notice, and what the experience might mean.

Reflection helps integrate what you learn into everyday life.

Celebrate!

After your reflection, pause to recognize and celebrate your effort, regardless of what happened. Exploring and experimenting are worth celebrating.

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The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey

The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey offers a structured way to explore the deck, focusing on one pillar each week in sequence: Awareness, Connection, Insight, and Purpose.

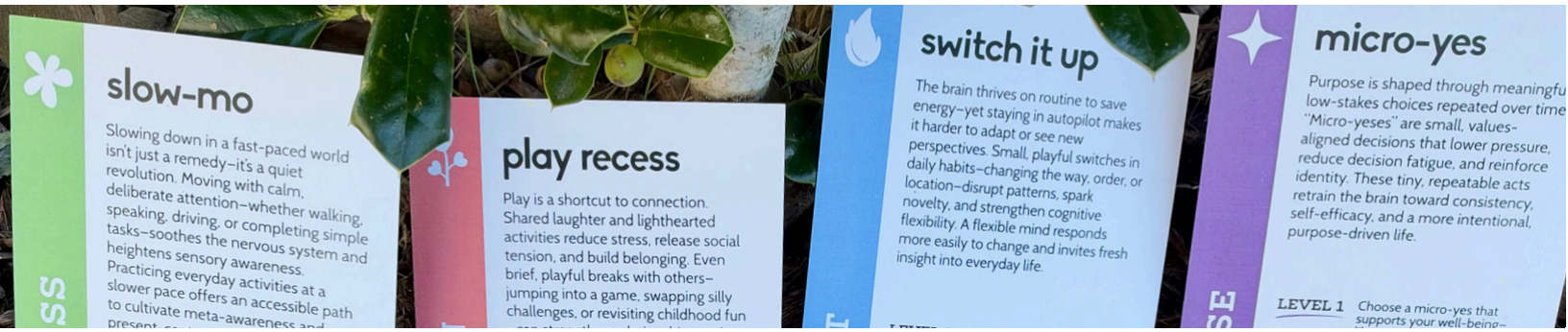
- **Choose three cards from the week's pillar:** two intentionally and one at random.
- **Explore one experiment on three separate days,** choosing the level that fits your curiosity, capacity, and context.
- **Capture brief Field Notes along the way,** then reflect later that day on what you noticed, experienced, or learned.
- **At the end of the week,** look across your three experiments for patterns, connections, or anything that sparks your curiosity.

Experiment Reminders

- Levels are independent–you can begin with any level at any time.
- Let random be random. Picking cards this way invites surprise, novelty, and discovery.
- Field Notes capture real-time observations to support reflection.
- Pairing a tiny experiment with reflection can deepen meaning.
- There is nothing to get right.

Research Note

The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey was tested as an educational intervention in a university course. Participants showed significant increases in overall well-being, Connection, and Insight, along with a trend toward increased Curiosity.



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Four-Week Experiment Schedule

Explore 12 experiments across four weeks:
three each week on separate days–
two chosen intentionally and one at random–
with Field Notes and reflections along the way.

WEEK 1 — AWARENESS

- Experiment 1 — Intentional
- Experiment 2 — Intentional
- Experiment 3 — Random

WEEK 2 — CONNECTION

- Experiment 4 — Intentional
- Experiment 5 — Intentional
- Experiment 6 — Random

WEEK 3 — INSIGHT

- Experiment 7 — Intentional
- Experiment 8 — Intentional
- Experiment 9 — Random

WEEK 4 — PURPOSE

- Experiment 10 — Intentional
- Experiment 11 — Intentional
- Experiment 12 — Random

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> *"I was more mindful of my feelings and thoughts after the experiment cards."*
>
> — *Experimenter*

Making Experimentation a Practice

Experimentation with the cards isn't about completing every one and moving on. It's about discovering how repeating tiny, playful practices can shape the way you relate to yourself, others, and everyday life.

Over time, you may notice certain experiments becoming trusted favorites while others take on new meaning in different seasons, relationships, or circumstances. Rather than working toward a finish line, think of the deck as a growing collection of invitations you can return to again and again.

Ways to Continue Experimenting

- Take the year-long journey. Explore one card each week, experimenting at all three levels before moving on.
- Repeat favorite cards. Revisit familiar experiments in different seasons, settings, or with different people, and notice what changes.
- Experiment together. Invite friends, family, coworkers, or classmates to share an experiment and compare experiences.
- Capture simple Field Notes. A few words, a photo, a voice memo, or a short reflection can help reveal patterns and deepen learning over time.

Experimentation is a practice.
Stay curious.
Be playful.
Notice what unfolds.

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More Ways to Play with the Cards

Mix, adapt, shuffle, revisit favorite cards, or create your own approach.
There's no single way to experiment–follow your curiosity and make the cards your own.

Progressive Card Path

Follow the four-pillar progression, beginning with foundational Awareness, then moving to Connection, Insight, and Purpose.

Pillar a Week

Immerse yourself in one well-being pillar for a full week, exploring as many cards as you'd like.

Card a Week

Deepen your practice with a single experiment. Repeat one level or complete Levels 1, 2, and 3.

Card a Day

Choose a card from any pillar, select a level, and conduct the experiment for the day.

Random Week

Let chance decide–
choose every experiment at random for a week, with no intentional picks.

Shared Journey

Choose a card for a day or week with a friend, partner, or group, then come together to share reflections.

Year-Long Path

Spend one week with each card, exploring all three levels–
52 cards and 156 experiments in one year.

Create Your Own Path

Design an experiment path with the cards based on your desires and needs:
"I will ___ for ___ weeks."

> *"They impacted my approach by being more open-minded and willing to try new things."*
>
> *— Experimenter*

> *"My way of thinking has shifted positively since I started studying and using these cards."*
>
> *— Experimenter*

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Facilitating Groups

Create the conditions for social learning and reflective insights gained through experimentation.

Provide Structure, Preserve Choice & Play

The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey offers a starting framework for groups. Provide enough structure to support the experience while preserving autonomy, curiosity, and play.

Whenever possible, preserve choice around:

- Which experiment to explore
- Which level to choose
- When and where to experiment
- How to adapt it to the context
- Whether and how much to share

Let Random be Random

Encourage participants to preserve the surprise of a random card while choosing the level that fits their capacity and context. Novelty offers a stretch beyond familiar choices, creating opportunities for discovery and growth.

Focus on Process, Perspectives, & Social Learning

Experiments create opportunities to notice, experience, reflect, and learn. There are no "correct" experiences or reflections. Learning can deepen through hearing how others experienced the same experiment, revealing different perspectives and possibilities. Sharing is always voluntary; personal exploration does not require private disclosure.

Professional Licensing Available

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Contact hello@dr.sidzstudio.com for information.



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Using the Cards Across Professional Settings

Educators

Bring the science of well-being to life through experiential learning. The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey provides a recommended starting framework. Born to Flourish (2026) by Richard J. Davidson and Cortland Dahl is an excellent supplemental resource for exploring the science in greater depth. Additional resources are available to support curriculum planning, classroom adaptations, group facilitation, and multi-week implementation. Contact hello@drsidzstudio.com.

Coaches

Use the experiments as between-session practices to encourage awareness, reflection, and action, while allowing clients to determine what they wish to explore and share.

Therapists & Clinicians

Use the cards as educational or experiential tools within your professional scope.
They complement – not replace – clinical assessment, diagnosis, or treatment.

Healthcare Professionals

Incorporate the cards into patient education, staff well-being initiatives, support groups, or team development. They are designed to complement – not replace – professional healthcare.

Workplace Teams

Encourage curiosity, connection, creativity, and reflection through shared experiences: Card of the Week, One Pillar at a Time, Random Card Day, Playful Experiment Week, or brief team discussions.

Facilitating Discussions

Encourage participants to complete their Field Notes before group discussions, so they can notice and make meaning of their own experience first. For sample discussion questions organized by theme, see Appendix B: Discussion Questions.

Professional Scope & Licensing

Professionals remain responsible for using the Well-Being Experiment Cards® within the purchased license, their own training, scope of practice, and ethical guidelines.
Reproducing the cards, or incorporating them into paid workshops, trainings, courses, or organizational programs requires a separate license or written permission from Cara L. Sidman, LLC.

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The Science Behind the Cards

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® are grounded in multidisciplinary research across psychology, neuroscience, learning science, and behavior change, drawing on complementary theories and frameworks including:

- **Healthy Minds Framework:** Four trainable wellbeing skills (the organizing structure for the cards)
- **The Plasticity of Well-Being:** Well-being is a set of trainable skills
- **Self-Determination Theory:** Autonomy, competence, relatedness
- **Growth Mindset:** Abilities develop through practice
- **Frame Pedagogy:** Reframing shifts engagement
- **Systematic Curiosity:** Curiosity fuels exploration and discovery
- **Playful Reframing:** Playfulness reveals new possibilities
- **Tiny Experiments:** Small, low-stakes actions create space to learn
- **Tiny Habits:** Small behaviors anchored to routines are easier to sustain
- **Experiential Learning:** Direct experience plus reflection deepens learning

Healthy Minds Framework: The Four Pillars of Well-Being

Awareness

A heightened, flexible attentiveness to one's environment and internal cues.

Skills:
Mindfulness, Attention, Self-awareness

Connection

A feeling of care and kinship toward others, promoting supportive relationships.

Skills:
Appreciation, Kindness, Compassion

Insight

Self-knowledge concerning how emotions, thoughts, and beliefs shape experience.

Skills:
Self-inquiry, Self-knowledge, Self-transcendence

Purpose

Being clear about core values and deeper motivation, and applying them daily.

Skills:
Clarifying purpose, Values awareness, Meaning-making

Primary skills adapted from the Healthy Minds Framework (Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin–Madison).
See next page for full reference list.



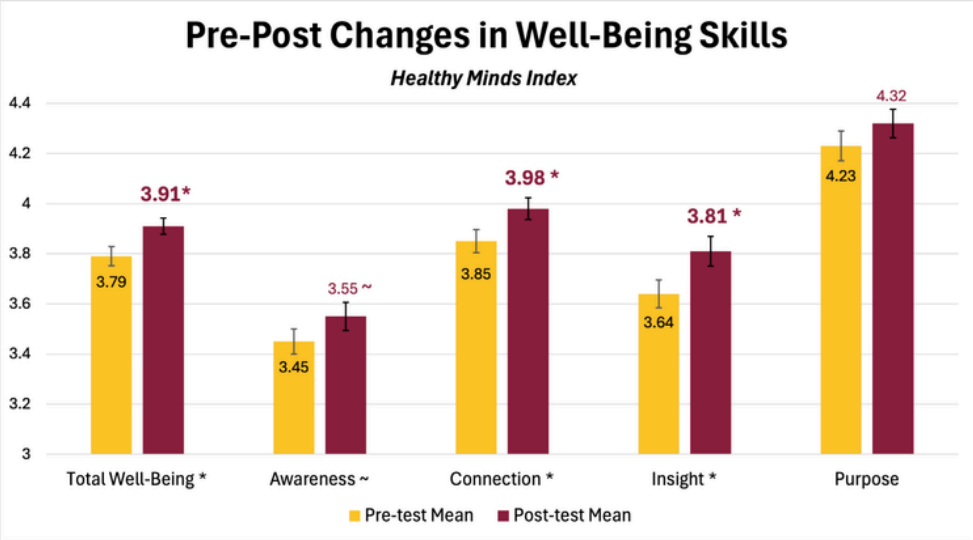
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"Through the restoration of my mind-body connection,
I finally feel like I have regained agency."
— Pre-Med Student

Research & References

Preliminary Data Evidence

The Four-Week, Four-Pillar Journey was tested as an educational intervention in a university well-being general education course. Participants showed significant increases in Total Well-being, Connection, and Insight, along with a trend toward increased curiosity.



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FAQS

How can they even work if they're so tiny?

Tiny doesn't mean insignificant. Every experiment teaches you something – whether it's ease, resistance, curiosity, understanding, joy, or surprise. Tiny practices repeated over time can build new neural pathways through neuroplasticity and lead to meaningful change.

What does it mean to pick a card intentionally?

Choose a card based on your curiosity, interests, or areas you want to develop.

Why do we pick cards at random?

Random selections introduce surprise, novelty, and play while encouraging you to explore experiences you might not have chosen on your own. Together with intentional selections, they create a richer and more balanced experiment experience.

How do I decide which level?

The three levels are stand-alone options, not progressive steps. Choose the level that fits your curiosity, capacity, energy, context, and needs; one that feels realistic with a gentle stretch.

What if I don't notice anything?

Noticing nothing is still noticing – and it's a valid observation. The practice may have been subtle, mistimed, or simply neutral that day.

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FAQS

What if I don't want to do a random card?

Notice your response–resistance can be useful information. Get curious about your reaction, then choose a level that feels like a realistic stretch. You can also adapt the practice to fit your circumstances. The surprise is part of the experiment.

What if I feel uncomfortable during my experiment?

Notice what you're experiencing without needing to push through it. You can modify, pause, or stop an experiment at any time. Discomfort or resistance can offer something to notice and reflect on, yet your well-being comes first. See the Self-Care Advisory in Appendix C for additional guidance.

Can I modify or pause an experiment?

Yes if something feels more than a gentle stretch, i.e., unsafe or destabilizing, choose a different level or adapt the practice to better meet your needs and circumstances. Make a note of the modifications for reflection later.

Do I have to keep Field Notes?

Field Notes are optional and can be as simple as a word, photo, voice note, or brief observation. They can help capture what you notice in the moment and support reflection and integration, and are recommended.

Is the goal to get through all 52 cards and conduct all 156 experiments?

No. The deck is a resource for ongoing experimentation, not a completion requirement. Explore all the Level 1s, repeat experiments, revisit a card at a different level, or move on to something new. Follow your curiosity.

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A Final Note from Dr. SidZ

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® began with a question that emerged after nearly three decades of teaching well-being.

I noticed that even meaningful assignments – like acts of kindness – could become another task completed on autopilot. That made me to wonder: What if well-being wasn't something we assigned – but something we explored and experienced?

These cards became my answer. Instead of creating one prescribed path, I created a deck of cards built on choice, variety, and play. Each tiny, science-based experiment invites you to explore, notice, and learn through your own felt experience. My hope is that these cards help you see well-being in a new way, through curiosity and experimentation, and that you enjoy well-being as a lifelong practice in everyday life.

Thank you for joining me in exploring tiny, playful experiments to experience the science of well-being in everyday life!

Dr. SidZ

May you have the curiosity & courage to know, love, & be yourself.

— Cara L. Sidman, PhD



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About Dr. SidZ

Dr. Cara L. Sidman is an educator, researcher, and creator with nearly three decades of experience in the science of well-being. Her work brings an artful, multidisciplinary approach to the field, translating research into tiny, playful practices for everyday life. She created the Well-Being Experiment Cards® and accompanying experiential curriculum and studies how these tiny experiments support well-being and learning.

A career-long academic and currently a professor at Arizona State University, Dr. Sidman's endless curiosity and love of learning lead her to question the status quo and explore new ways of thinking, seeing, and experiencing life.

This out-of-the-box thinking, combined with her joy of exploration and spirit of creation, became the foundation for Dr. SidZ Studio, A Pause Playground for Exploring Life, where science meets curiosity, play, stories, and experimentation.

Hi! I'm Cara



aka Dr. SidZ

My Mission

To create and share fresh, playful tools and resources grounded in science to invite people to explore and Pause Into Life, with greater awareness, love, and wonder.

And always close by is Zenna, the Z in Dr. SidZ Studio.

Chief Pause & Paws Officer, service dog, and furry inspiration to pause, notice, sniff, play, and fully experience the present moment. 🐾



Zenna

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Dr. SidZ Studio

A Pause Playground for Exploring Life

Dr. Cara L. Sidman is an educator, researcher, and creator who has spent nearly three decades researching and teaching well-being and human behavior.

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® emerged from years of classroom innovation, student feedback, and ongoing research. Their use and evidence base continue to expand across multiple universities and thousands of students.

Explore the Studio

SCAN HERE

Discover more tools, resources, and tiny, playful sparks for exploring everyday life.

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Dr. SidZ Studio

Pause Into Life

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Appendix A: Complete Card Index

Each card has a unique Card ID consisting of the pillar letter and card number (e.g., A-01), located in the bottom-right corner of the card.

Awareness

A-01 being breaks
A-02 take a breather
A-03 mental notes
A-04 sensory scan
A-05 the name game
A-06 silent transitions
A-07 grounding down
A-08 attention reps
A-09 embody your body
A-10 nurture nature
A-11 mindful movement
A-12 slow-mo
A-13 play into being

Connection

C-01 the smile effect
C-02 natural appreciation
C-03 gratitude groove
C-04 lol
C-05 airplane mode
C-06 connection sparks
C-07 share moments
C-08 truth or dare
C-09 story time
C-10 surprise acts
C-11 perspective seeker
C-12 play recess
C-13 return to love

Insight

I-01 tuning in
I-02 curiosity questions
I-03 write your mind
I-04 novelty quest
I-05 word swap
I-06 be your bestie
I-07 befriend stress
I-08 fail fest
I-09 switch it up
I-10 feedback loop
I-11 unlearning lab
I-12 discomfort zone
I-13 being spaces

Purpose

P-01 joy scout
P-02 micro yeses
P-03 fun fuel
P-04 purpose playground
P-05 tiny wins
P-06 look up
P-07 notes to self
P-08 let the music play
P-09 gentle nudges
P-10 sunrise rituals
P-11 winding down
P-12 helping hand
P-13 life lab

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Appendix B: Discussion Questions

Reflecting on the Experience

- What did you notice? What surprised you? What stood out most?
- What, if anything, felt different from what you expected?
- What discomfort or resistance, if any, did you notice?
- What supported or limited your experience?

Social Learning

- What similarities or differences did you notice across people's experiences?
- What did someone else share that expanded your perspective?
- How did hearing different perspectives influence your understanding of the experiment?

Reflecting Across Skills & Pillars

- What well-being skill did this experiment invite you to practice?
- What did you notice about Awareness, Connection, Insight, or Purpose through this experiment?
- What did you learn about yourself, others, or everyday life?
- Across different pillars and experiments, what patterns or differences are you beginning to notice?

Integrating the Learning

- How might you bring something you noticed or learned into everyday life?
- What, if anything, do you want to carry forward from this experiment?
- Would you revisit this experiment, perhaps at another level or in a different context? Why or why not?
- What are you curious to experiment with next?

Reflecting on the Experiment Process

- What did you notice about choosing a card intentionally compared with picking one randomly?
- How did your expectations differ between intentional and random selections?
- What did the element of surprise add to your experience with a randomly selected card?
- How has your approach to experimentation changed over time?

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Appendix C: Self-Care & Professional Disclaimer

Self-Care Advisory

The purpose of the Well-Being Experiment Cards® is to encourage playful, science-informed exploration of well-being through tiny, one-day experiments.

Because the cards invite reflection and new experiences, some activities may feel uncomfortable, surprising, or emotionally meaningful. While a gentle stretch can be part of learning, your well-being always comes first.

Choose experiments and levels that feel appropriate for your current needs and circumstances. Feel free to modify, pause, or skip any activity, limit personal disclosure, or seek support from a qualified professional when needed.

An experiment is always an invitation, never an obligation.

If you are experiencing a medical or mental health emergency, contact emergency services or an appropriate crisis resource immediately.

Professional Disclaimer

The Well-Being Experiment Cards® are provided for educational and personal-growth purposes only. They are not intended to provide medical, psychological, psychiatric, therapeutic, or other healthcare advice and are not a substitute for diagnosis, treatment, therapy, or individualized care from a qualified healthcare professional.

If you have concerns about your physical or mental health, or have or believe you may have a medical or mental health condition, consult an appropriately qualified healthcare professional before participating in these activities.

By using these cards, you acknowledge that participation is voluntary and that you are responsible for exercising your own judgment regarding your participation.

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