

Making Wellbeing Real:

How to Embed What Matters Most into Everyday Care

Wellbeing is what matters most to many older adults. The Ariadne Labs and AgingIN wellbeing resources help long-term care organizations systematically attend to wellbeing for every elder they serve. This summary introduces these tools and highlights how they can help your leaders and staff improve the care they deliver.

What Do We Mean by Wellbeing?

Wellbeing is not the same as happiness all the time, and it isn't a one-size-fits-all outcome. Wellbeing is a person's own sense that their life has value and meaning.

Years of research, and conversations with older adults themselves, point to four domains that consistently shape this experience:

- **Meaning** — *"I feel my life matters and is worthwhile."*
- **Autonomy** — *"I feel in control of my life, day, and choices."*
- **Social Connection** — *"I have meaningful relationships."*
- **Security** — *"I feel safe, comfortable, and cared for."*

Every elder holds these domains differently, and what matters most to someone today may shift tomorrow as their health, relationships, or circumstances change. Your organization's role isn't to define wellbeing for the people in your care. It's to create the conditions where wellbeing can be understood, supported, and sustained.

Why Wellbeing Belongs at the Center of Care

Wellbeing is not a “nice-to-have” layered on top of clinical care. It is central to person-directed care itself.

Research shows that when residents experience meaning, autonomy, social connection, and security, their quality of life improves. The benefit runs in both directions. When staff are supported to notice what matters most to a resident, act on it, and see the impact of their own work, they report feeling more connected to residents and more positive about their ability to make a difference. Care becomes more personal. Teams reconnect to purpose.

“When wellbeing is visible and supported, everyone benefits.”

Moving From Individual Moments to Organizational Practice

Members of your team are almost certainly attending to residents' wellbeing already, often in small, easy-to-miss ways: opening ketchup packets because a resident asked, learning that a resident living with advanced dementia still knows every word to her favorite songs, noticing that a resident lights up outdoors and finding a way to get them there more often.

What's typically missing in organizations isn't commitment. It's consistency, a shared language, and clear processes for capturing what one team member learns and making sure the whole team can act on it. Without that structure, valuable insight about an elder stays with whoever happened to hear it, and it is easily lost when a shift changes or a team member moves on.

This is the gap the toolkit is built to close: moving wellbeing from something individual staff members “just do” to something your organization intentionally supports and sustains — across roles, shifts, and settings.

What This Toolkit Is Designed to Do

The Wellbeing Toolkit and its companion Organizational Integration Toolkit give your organization a practical, research-informed way to build wellbeing into how you already operate. Together, they include:

- **A Wellbeing Framework and Conversation Guide** that helps care partners learn what matters most to each resident across the four domains, along with a note-taking tool to document what they learn.
- **An Organizational Integration Toolkit**, with eight sections of step-by-step guidance covering leadership readiness, preparing Wellbeing Champions, staff education, embedding wellbeing into daily practice, sustaining momentum, and aligning your organization's beliefs, behaviors, and systems.
- **Short training videos and simple, one-page handouts** that introduce each of the four domains to staff in plain, accessible language.
- **Templates and worksheets** for care plan documentation, welcoming new elders, daily huddles, and QAPI tracking — so wellbeing insights don't stay in one conversation, one role, or one document.

These resources are designed to work together. Used as intended, they help wellbeing become part of how care is planned, delivered, and reflected on every day — not a single training event your team completes once and moves past.

How This Supports Leaders

For you and your leadership team, this toolkit helps:

- Make wellbeing visible and actionable across your systems, not dependent on any one person remembering to ask.
- Support more personalized, goal-aligned care that reflects each resident's own preferences and priorities.

- Align with regulatory expectations around person-centered care with broader expectations around elders' goals, preferences, and priorities.
- Reduce staff burnout by reconnecting your team to the purpose and relationships that drew them to this work in the first place.

Most importantly, it helps ensure that what matters most to the people in your care doesn't get lost — no matter who is on shift or what pressures the day brings.

Prioritizing wellbeing isn't about adding more to your team's plates. It's about aligning your systems, your practices, and your values around what already matters most. The resources are here, the path is clear, and the impact — on residents, staff, and your organization — is real.