
Developing Skills for Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Primary Workshop Organizer

Petr Slovak

Human Computer Interaction Group
Institute of Design and Assessment of Technology
Vienna University of Technology
Argentinierstrasse 8, 2. Stock
1040 Vienna, Austria

Tel: +431 58801 18738

Email: petr@igw.tuwien.ac.at

Proposal: Developing Skills for Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Workshop Topic and Rationale

Exploring the potential of digital technology to support emotional wellbeing has become an important research topic across HCI over the last decade, motivated by the essential role that emotional wellbeing plays in people's health and quality of life. A recent shift within psychology research argues that a person's emotional wellbeing is dependent not only on external factors and a lack of mental illness, but also requires a set of well-developed social and emotional skills, and the possibility for personal growth and development.

However, our understanding of how digital technology can scaffold the learning of such skills, or promote individuals' self-development more generally, is still in its early stages. Furthermore, little consideration has been given so far to the potential of technology to facilitate preventive approaches that promote and strengthen social and emotional skills for both at-risk and general populations, increasing emotional wellbeing and lowering occurrence of mental illnesses.

This workshop aims to bring together a diverse community of researchers, designers and practitioners to share and consolidate prior work; to identify existing examples of best practice and explore the opportunities that digital technology brings for the development of social and emotional skills crucial to create and maintain mental wellbeing; and to identify the key challenges to learning of such skills, with the view to promote and shape an agenda for future work.

Workshop Themes

We invite work from a broad range of contexts in which digital technology could facilitate the development and learning of skills to support wellbeing, as exemplified by three selected topics:

- (1) Drawing on *social and emotional learning in education*, as a field with a long history of supporting skills training for at-risk and general populations;
- (2) Facilitating development of skills for carers of people experiencing *irreversible loss of mental or physical capacity* (e.g., in dementia); and
- (3) Supporting *skills training as part of therapeutic treatment*, particularly building on positive psychology.

Before the workshop

We will promote the workshop via appropriate professional mailing lists and social networks (e.g. Facebook and Twitter), and set up a workshop website (SkillsForWellbeing.org) to recruit participants and to conduct preliminary discussion of workshop themes in the months leading up to CHI. We will especially encourage participation by researchers in the Asia Pacific and Australasia: there are a number of relevant projects in this region and this workshop is an opportunity for them to connect with the CHI community. For example, Australia's *Young and Well Collaborative Research Centre* brings together 75 partner organizations to explore the role of technology in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people. Overall, we aim to attract a group of 15-25 researchers, designers and practitioners with a variety

of backgrounds, experiences and interests including researchers with an educational or clinical background, and from industry.

Accepted position papers will be made available on the workshop website allowing participants as well as the wider community to access them before and after the workshop. We will also ask authors of accepted papers to submit one question they would like to have explored at the workshop, which will be incorporated into the day's activities. Before the workshop, we will curate position papers into 'reading groups' to ensure small groups of attendees have read each other's papers, and feed this into the workshop activities.

During the workshop

The workshop will provide a balance of plenary sessions, break-out discussions and practical design activities. In the first session, a world-café activity will provide workshop attendees with the opportunity to meet one another and gain insight into each other's perspectives. The second session will be based on short break-out discussions facilitated by the organizers, where authors will be 'Q&A'd on their papers and their prompting questions from pre-assigned workshop attendees. After lunch, each group will briefly feedback their discussions with a focus on identifying best case examples from practice. Following this, attendees will be invited to propose new and emerging themes for final group discussions that will work towards identifying plans for future work.

Timetable

09:00- 09:30	Welcome by organizers
09:30- 11:00	World-Café, including brief description of areas of interest and projects
11:00- 11:30	Coffee break

11:30- 13:00	Author 'Q&A' in parallel breakout groups, exchanging perspectives on methods for skills development
13:00- 14:30	Lunch
14:30- 15:10	Plenary group feedback (10 min./ group)
15:10- 15:30	Identifying final themes
15:30- 16:00	Coffee break
16:00- 16:45	Final group discussions around emerging themes, with a view to identifying plans for future work
16:15- 17:30	Summary & closing remarks
19:00	Workshop dinner/ drinks

After the workshop

The outcomes of the workshop will be presented to CHI 2015 attendees as part of the 'spotlight on workshops' poster session, illustrating a summary of the key themes and design ideas that were discussed. A report of the findings will also be included on the workshop website and written up for the SIGCHI Bulletin.

This workshop builds on previous, yet distinct, workshops at *CHI'12* (Interaction Design and Emotional Wellbeing) and *OzCHI'13* (Social technologies for Health and Wellbeing), each of which attracted a large number of paper submissions. Subsequent the CHI 2012 workshop we organized a Special Issue of the *International Journal of Human Computer Studies* (Designing Emotional Wellbeing, published Aug 2014). Following this workshop, we will work towards publishing an edited book, which will focus on the current state of research and design in supporting personal and social skills development, including selected case studies by workshop participants.

About the Organizers

A large organizing committee comprised of members with varying research, design and practice-based backgrounds has been created to reflect the complexity of the workshop theme.

Petr Slovak is a Researcher in the Human Computer Interaction Group at Vienna University of Technology. With background in psychology and computer science, his research focuses on supporting social and emotional skills learning in educational and therapeutical settings.

Greg Wadley is a Research Fellow in the Interaction Design Group at the University of Melbourne focusing on the design and evaluation of technologies for health and wellbeing.

David Coyle is a Senior Lecturer in Human Computer Interaction at the University of Bristol. His research focuses on the design and evaluation of technologies to support mental and emotional health.

Anja Thieme is a Researcher in Computing Science at Newcastle University. Her research focuses on sensitive and empathic approaches in the design and evaluation of digital technology that aims to support the mental wellbeing of people who suffer from Depression, Borderline Personality Disorder, or Dementia.

Naomi Yamashita is a Primary Researcher at NTT Communication Science Labs. Her current projects include the design of mental healthcare technologies to support the wellbeing of people around depressed individuals and the design of technologies to overcome language barriers in global communication.

Reeva Lederman is a Senior Lecturer in the Computing and Information Systems (CIS) department at the University of Melbourne. She leads the

Computational Bioinformatics and Health Information Systems Research group in CIS.

Stefan Schutt is Research Program Leader at the Centre for Cultural Diversity and Wellbeing at Victoria University. He researches young people's use of technology, and runs a technology club for young Asperger's sufferers.

Mia Doces is the Director for New Ventures, at the Committee for Children, a non-profit organisation developing social and emotional learning (SEL) curricula for over 35 years. She also serves on state- and national-level initiatives considering bullying prevention and SEL programs.

The organizers will be further supported in the CfP distribution as well as submissions review and selection process by the following *Program Committee* members:

Mario Alvarez-Jimenez, University of Melbourne, AUS
Rachel Clarke, Newcastle University, UK
Jean Costa, Cornell University, US
Mary Czerwinski, Microsoft Research Seattle, US
Kathleen Gray, University of Melbourne, AUS
Geraldine Fitzpatrick, University of Vienna, A
Conor Linehan, Lincoln University, UK
Mark Matthews, Cornell University, US
John McCarthy, University College Cork, IRL
Bernd Ploderer, University of Melbourne, AUS
Carsten Rocker, RWTH Aachen, GER
Shaun Lawson, Lincoln University, UK
Brian Smith, Committee for Children, US
Wally Smith, University of Melbourne, AUS
Jayne Wallace, Dundee University, UK
Jenny Waycott, University of Melbourne, AUS
Maria Wolters, University of Edinburgh, UK

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Petr Slovak

HCI Group,
Vienna University of Technology, A
petr@igw.tuwien.ac.at

Greg Wadley

Interaction Design Group
The University of Melbourne, AUS
greg.wadley@unimelb.edu.au

David Coyle

Bristol Interaction and Graphics,
University of Bristol, UK
david.coyle@bristol.ac.uk

Anja Thieme

Digital Interaction Group
Culture Lab,
Newcastle University, UK
anja.thieme@ncl.ac.uk

Naomi Yamashita

NTT Communication Science
Labs, Kyoto, JP
naomiy@acm.org

Reeva Lederman

Department of Computing and
Information Systems,
The University of Melbourne, AUS
reeva.lederman@unimelb.edu.au

Stefan Schutt

Centre for Cultural Diversity and
Wellbeing,
Victoria University, AUS
stefan.schutt@vu.edu.au

Mia Doces

Committee for Children,
Seattle, WA, USA
mdoces@cfchildren.org

Abstract

Positive social and emotional wellbeing are essential for peoples' general health and quality of life. This workshop will bring together an inter-disciplinary community of wellbeing researchers, designers and practitioners to explore how digital technology can increase wellbeing by enabling users to develop new skills, build on existing personal strengths or social support, and promote self-efficacy more generally. We will jointly reach a better understanding of the opportunities that technology can bring for skills development across a broad range of contexts. Our aim is to consider how digital technology can support wellbeing skills for the general public and also for specific, at-need groups including the care givers of people coping with irreversible loss of mental or physical capacity and psycho-education for people experiencing mental health difficulties.

Author Keywords

Well-Being, Education, Communication, Positive Psychology, Social Care, Skills Development.

Introduction

In recent years, researchers in the field of Psychology and Healthcare increasingly argue that effective support of mental health requires both the treatment of any mental illness and the presence of emotional wellbeing [6]. This more holistic view is also captured

by the World Health Organization [15, p.12], which describes emotional wellbeing as a state *“which allows individuals to realize their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to their community”*.

A person's emotional wellbeing is thus not understood as fully dependent on external factors, but also on a set of well-developed social and emotional skills such as strategies for coping with adverse events, emotional awareness, or self-regulation; as well as the persons' fundamental sense of self-efficacy, including trust in their ability to grow as an individual, a sense of autonomy, and a feeling of social connectedness [14]. Facilitating the development of these skills is crucial to promoting emotional wellbeing and is a key shared component across prevention-oriented programs in education [4] as well as in mental health therapies [2].

HCI researchers are increasingly exploring opportunities for facilitating emotional wellbeing through digital technology [1]. Part of this work is focused on approaches to promote social connectedness and intimacy [5], or to increase self-awareness and reflection [10]; but also on supporting people with a diagnosis of mental illness, highlighting the potential of technology to augment the delivery of traditional psychotherapy approaches. This includes systems targeted at extending the reach of therapeutic services and promoting clients' engagement [3,7,12].

However, only a few of these systems explicitly discuss, or design for, the development of social and emotional skills needed for achieving emotional wellbeing (for exceptions see [7, 8, 9, 11]). As such we believe that the potential of digital technology to directly scaffold or promote such learning is currently under-researched. Moreover, most existing applications are informed in

their understanding of wellbeing by the medical tradition, which traditionally views wellbeing as the absence of illness. The focus is then on reducing symptoms rather than promoting the person's strengths and ensuring continued growth and self-development. To date, much work has responded to challenges related to enabling access to therapy resources and facilitating treatment. Less consideration has been given to approaches for preventing mental illness and facilitating the social and emotional skills development of the general population [4]; to supporting those who may not be diagnosed with mental illness but still lack emotional wellbeing [14]; or to improving the wellbeing of care givers of people who are less likely to recover from their mental health condition (e.g., Parkinson's or dementia).

Aims of the Workshop

HCI research on the development of technology to support skills development for social and emotional wellbeing is in its early stages. This workshop therefore aims to bring together a diverse community of researchers and practitioners to explore the opportunities that digital technology offers for the development of the social and emotional skills crucial to form and maintain emotional wellbeing. Overall, the workshop will provide a forum to share expertise across domains; gain a richer understanding of the challenges as well as the design methods to promote the learning of such skills; and set an agenda for future work.

Topics of Interest

We invite work from a broad range of contexts in which digital technology could facilitate the development and learning of skills for social and emotional wellbeing, exemplified by three promising directions below. Across all of these, we will especially welcome submissions

considering how technology can *'teach and disappear'*, i.e., aim to scaffold users' skills development, but can be removed once the learning is complete.

Social and Emotional Learning in Education

Educational Psychology has a long history of creating social and emotional skills learning (SEL) curricula as preventive programs for both general and at-risk student populations. These have been deployed to millions of pupils [4] and the learning strategies inherent in these curricula help young learners develop skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, coping, or problem solving; all of which help facilitate growth and resilience. Indeed, an increasing body of evidence suggests that such skills can lower the chance of mental health problems at later age and increase emotional wellbeing [14]. However, very little work in HCI has explored this area of research so far. This opens questions around the opportunities that are provided by technology to further augment the learning of students, and to enhance impact, scope and effectiveness of SEL curricula. How can technology effectively reinforce the preventive effects of such programs? And finally, how can SEL curricula inform HCI research, such as guiding the incorporation of the successful strategies to learn social and emotional skills into the design of technology systems in other settings?

Skills & Techniques for Socially Constructing Wellbeing

For a variety of health conditions such as chronic pain, Parkinson's or Dementia, full recovery is unlikely. In such cases we require strategies for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing that are respectful of the ongoing and possibly degenerative nature of the difficulties, as well as the loss in physical or mental abilities that sufferers experience. In particular in the care for people with Dementia or Parkinson's, the role

of care-givers (family members, professionals) plays a fundamental role in socially co-constructing a person's sense of self and contributing to their social and emotional wellbeing. Thus, what opportunities are provided by technology to help care givers develop or support skills to cope with, and accept, the often challenging health condition and related transitions in their life? How can technology assist carers in providing the cared for individuals opportunities to build on their remaining strengths and enable them to maintain a sense of continued growth and development, despite potential limitations in their abilities? How can technology sensitively assist carers to initiate and enrich social interactions that feel meaningful to the person, and enable them to feel socially connected, or experience calm [cf. 13]? In addition, how can technology also help promote the wellbeing and improve resilience skills of the carers, who often experience social and emotional stress as part of their care provision [16]?

Supporting Skills Learning in Therapeutic Approaches

In recent years the HCI community has become increasingly engaged with the challenge of designing technology to support mental health interventions. Key challenges in this research have included the need to improve access to professional support and also improve engagement with treatments [2]. In the context of this workshop we are particularly interested in understanding how technology can change the dynamics of therapeutic interventions, support improved psycho-education and self efficacy—critical elements of many interventions—and also allow us to draw more effectively on informal caregivers. Looking beyond the Cognitive Behavioural approaches applied in many computer-supported interventions, we

particularly aim to explore recent work drawing on positive psychology. How can we, for example, design social networking sites or other technologies that would help clients identify their strengths, sensitively promote social support from their informal caregivers or peers, provide opportunities for growth, or facilitate the development of a lasting, positive self-esteem?

Intended Audience

This one-day workshop will invite 15-25 participants. It aims to support interdisciplinary discussion around the development of social and emotional skills as a means to enhance and protect peoples' wellbeing (individually or supported by others). It will include discussion and exchange of knowledge around the challenges of developing sensitive design methods and technology in this space, with a view to promote and shape an agenda for future research. Submissions will be solicited from researchers, designers, and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to education, social sciences, healthcare, HCI and interaction design.

References

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CFP: Developing Skills for Social and Emotional Wellbeing

**Call for participation: CHI 2015 Workshop on
*Developing Skills for Social and Emotional Wellbeing***

This one-day workshop will be held as part of the CHI 2015 annual ACM SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Science, held in Seoul (South Korea) between the 18th and 23rd of April.

Important Dates:

- Submission by: 25th Jan. 2015
- Notification of acceptance: 20th Feb. 2015
- Workshop day: 18th or 19th of April 2015

Text

Positive social and emotional wellbeing are essential for peoples' general health and quality of life. This workshop will bring together an inter-disciplinary community of wellbeing researchers, designers and practitioners to explore how digital technology can increase wellbeing by enabling users to develop new skills, build on existing personal strengths or social support, and promote self-efficacy more generally. We will jointly reach a better understanding of the opportunities that technology can bring for skills development across a broad range of contexts. Our aim is to consider how digital technology can support wellbeing skills for the general public and also for specific, at need groups including the care givers of people coping with irreversible loss of mental or physical capacity and psycho-education for people experiencing mental health difficulties.

We invite authors to submit 3-4 page position papers (in ACM [Extended Abstract Format](#)) describing research and design ideas as well as strategies for supporting peoples wellbeing through the development of personal and social skills. We welcome submission relating to, but not limited to, the following topics:

- Designs and design methods that support the development of personal and social skills;
- Case studies that report on personal and social skills development in the context of wellbeing research;
- Analysis of strategies by which existing systems, perhaps implicitly, support the learning of social and emotional skills.

Submissions should be submitted to our EasyChair site <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=skillsforwellbeing20> . Position papers will be reviewed by a committee of experts in the aforementioned topics according to their significance, quality of presentation, as well as their potential to stimulate discussion.

At least one author of each accepted submission must register for the workshop and at least one day of the main conference. For more information, please visit <http://www.SkillsForWellbeing.org/>