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# European Mental Health Week

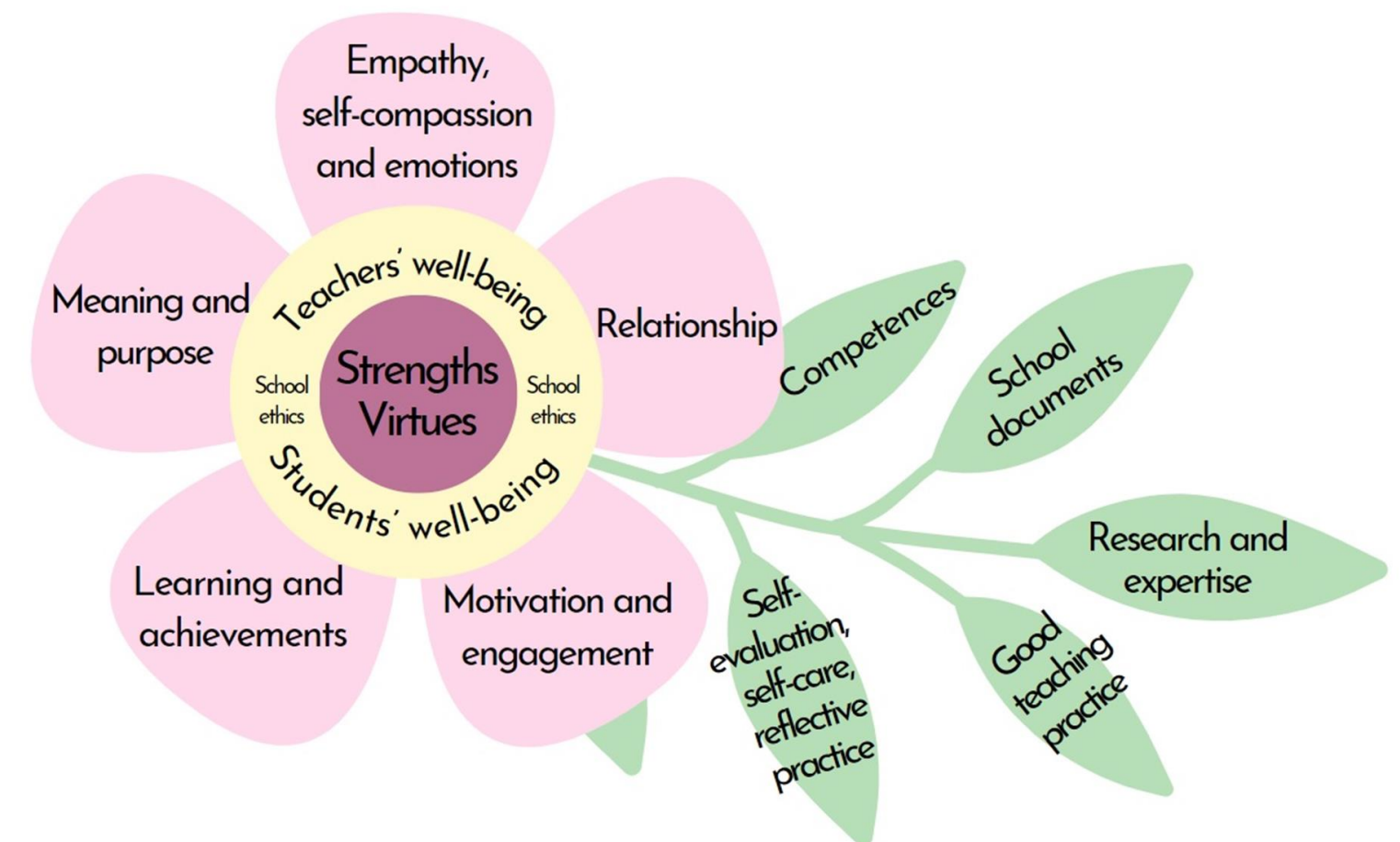
Gender Gap and the Potential of Positive Education in Strengthening Resilience and Wellbeing of Youth

Online 15th May 2024

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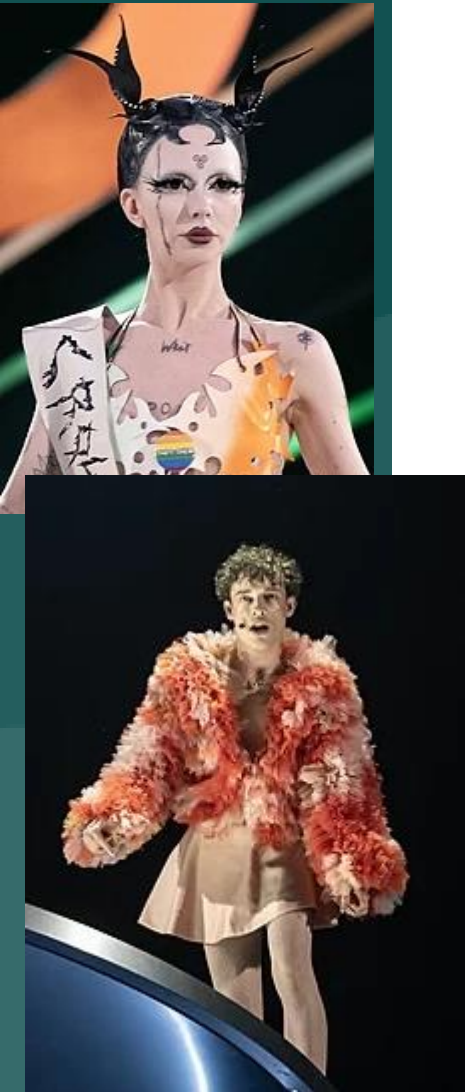
# (Interactive) Presentation structure

1. Gender gap and Mental health (MH)
2. Potential of Positive Education for enhancing mental health, resilience and well - being



# Gender gap in MH: common research findings

- Internalizing MH issues: more common in women
- Externalizing MH issues: more common in men
- Women have a significantly higher frequency of depression, anxiety and (predisposing factors for) eating problems in adolescence and adulthood.
- Men have a larger prevalence of suicide, substance use and antisocial behaviors.
- MH of non-binary persons - not enough (quantitative) data and scarce research...
- There is an inequality with regard to mental health and quality of life between non-binary (and binary) transgender people and the cisgender population that needs to be addressed...many of them are **stemming from societal norms** (Jones et al, 2019).
- Increase of stress and lack of protective factors (e.g., awareness of own strenghts, resilience, self-efficacy...) could be partially responsible for growing issues in mental health of youth. (Zotović-Kostić & Beara, 2016).
- What is the reason for these gender gaps?



# Gender gap in risk-seeking: one possible reason

- Possible reason why men are more prone to externalizing MH problems: **Precarious Manhood Theory** (Vandello et al, 2023) (Fragile Masculinity)
- Refers to the **belief** that manhood/masculinity is an achieved social status that **must be earned and constantly defended**, because it can be lost or taken away. How to defend? By aggressive or risk behaviors that demonstrate toughness and courage.
- This belief is pervasive in varying degrees across cultures; comparable beliefs about womanhood status are rare
- Country-level beliefs about gender (not just men's own masculinity and masculinity-related beliefs), are correlated with health behaviors and outcomes (moderately) and with life-expectancy of men (strongly).



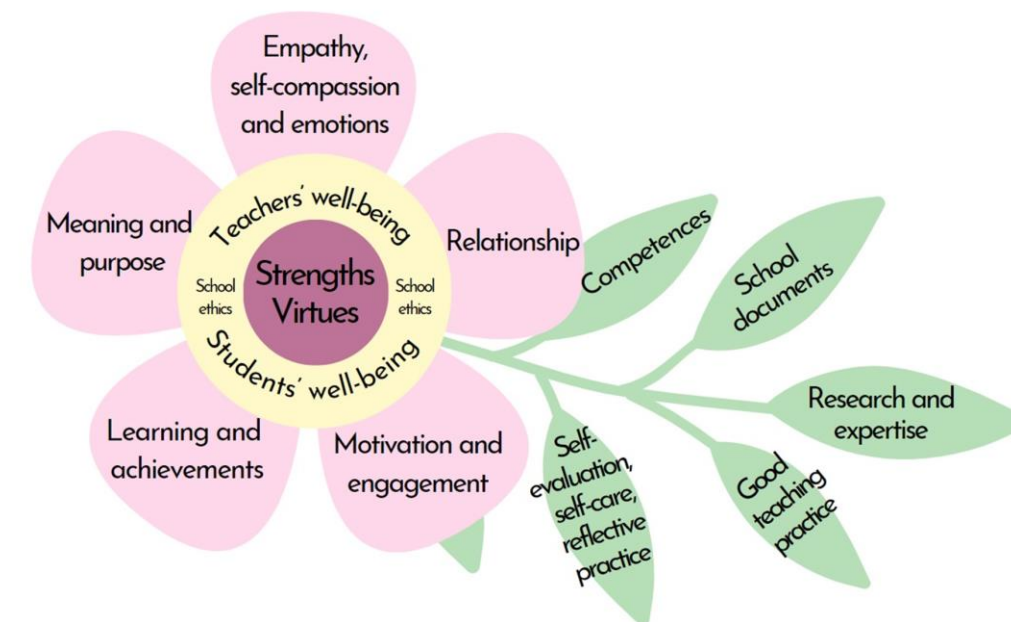
# In focus: gender gap in using psychosocial services

- Research and experience shows that women are more open and active to seek for counselling and psychotherapy
- E.g.: OPENS (2023): Young female counselling service-users: **78- 86%**.
- Why this happens?
- How to increase accessibility and attractiveness of MH services to young male with MH issues?

# Some ideas – how to attract male users (OPENS, 2023)

- Diversified psychosocial education for different groups of (potential) users: MH in sports, relationships, sexual initiation, prevention of risky sexual behavior, cyber resilience, internet-use MH issues, gambling, betting...
- Learning how to be „masculine“ without aggression or risk behaviour (assertiveness training for boys and men...)?
- Positive education as a primary-preventive approach for enhancing resilience? (not only for male 😊)

# Potential of Positive Education in Strengthening Resilience and Wellbeing of Youth



# Let's remind ourselves: What is psychological resilience?



- Resilience is defined as „positive psychological adaptation in the face of change. It is nurtured, developed, and mobilized in times of stress“ (Tait, 2008, p. 72).
- Resilience and wellbeing are positively associated; wellbeing is wider concept.
- According to the APA Dictionary, **"resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands"** (APA).



# 3 groups of protective factor for resilience in youth (Petrović, 2020)

## **PERSONAL DISPOSITION CHARACTERISTICS**

- Developed cognitive abilities
- Sociability and positive response to others - verbal fluency and social expressiveness
- Self-confidence, self-efficacy
- Internal locus of control - the opposite of learned helplessness - an active approach to problem solving
- Hope, optimism
- Autonomy
- **Internalized values and character strenghts**

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FAMILY**

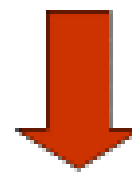
- Close relationship with at least one family member
- Existence of structure, clear and realistic expectations
- A feeling of warmth, cohesion
- Good socioeconomic status
- Connection with extended family

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY**

- **The existence of adults outside the family who advocate for the child/young person interests (teachers, school psychologists...)**
- Connection with social organizations in the community
- (Healthy) beliefs and values in the community/culture...?

# How to support resilience and well-being in youth?

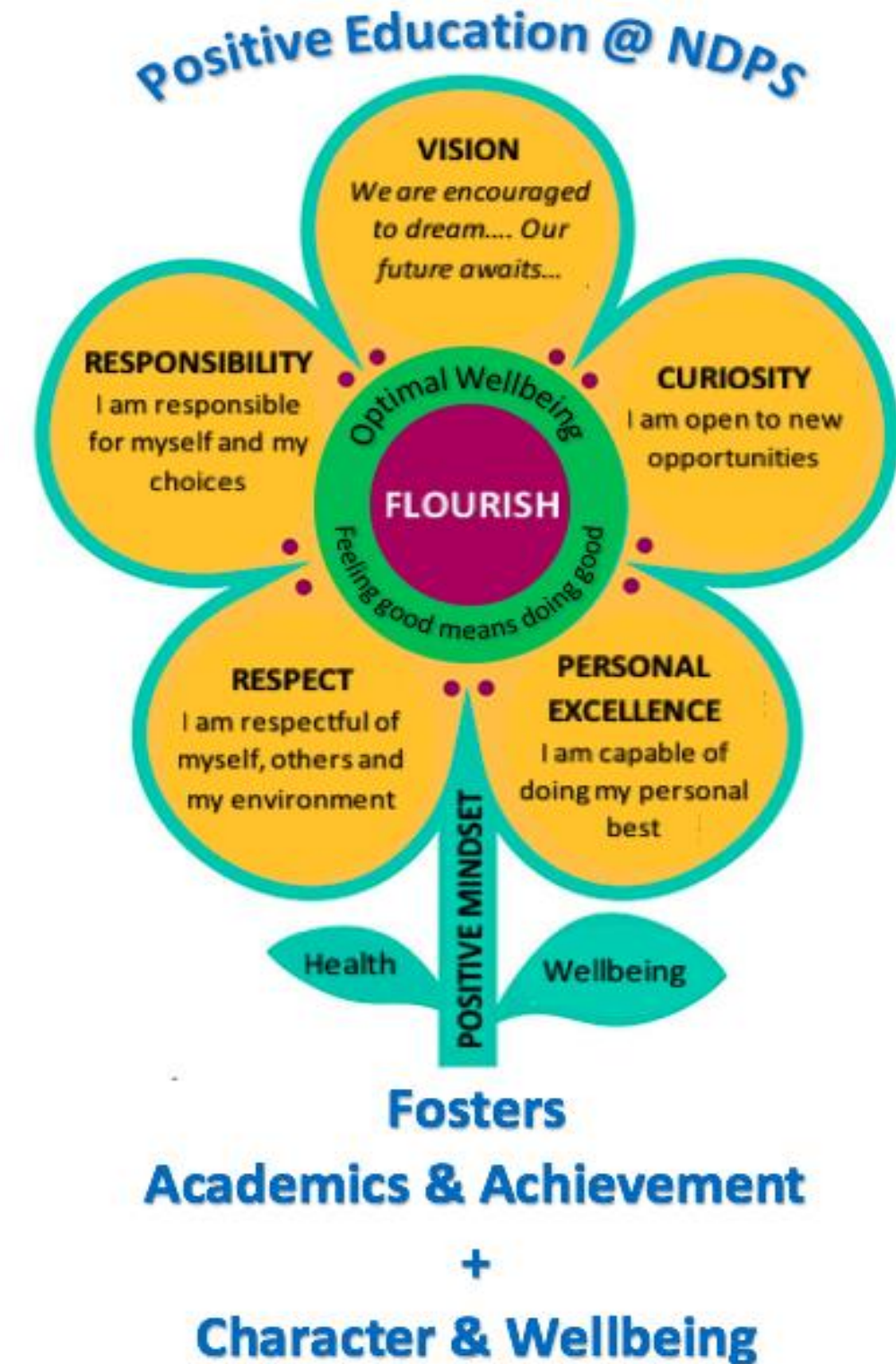
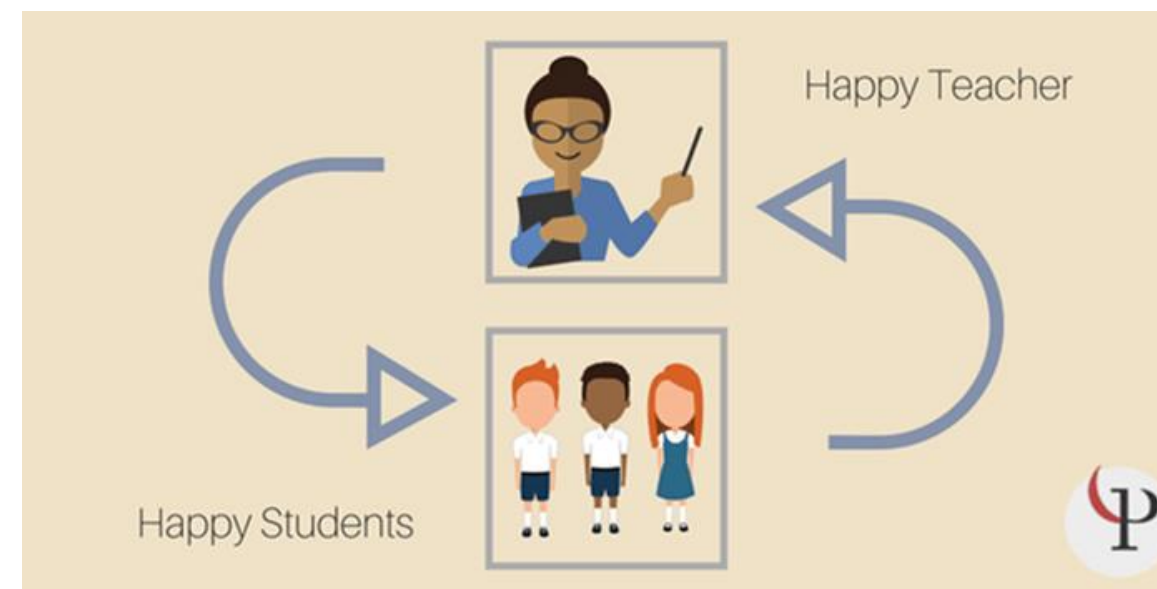
Fixing what's wrong/problems



**What makes life good, valuable and meaningful?**

# What is positive education?

- Along with **educational achievements**, teachers and students **focus on the well-being**: discovery and use of **character strengths, vision, motivation, values and meaning**, thus enabling them to develop and "flourish".
- Positive education does not mean that all other education is "negative" or that current schools are bad.



# Character strenghts

- Research points to the great importance of activities that are based on strengths for overcoming crises, reduce stress and develop resilience.
- Character strengths can be used to **improve or better manage "what's wrong"** (such as stress and other difficulties).
- When we are able to use our "typical, basic" strengths, our **depression decreases** (Schutte & Malouff, 2019)
- Also, when we use strenghts, our sense of **life satisfaction and well-being increase** (ibid)





# VIA Character Strengths Model

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004):  
6 VIRTUES and 24 STRENGTHS

			ViaCharacter.org							
<b>WISDOM</b>	<b>CREATIVITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Originality</li><li>• Adaptive</li><li>• Ingenuity</li></ul>	<b>CURIOSITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interest</li><li>• Novelty-Seeking</li><li>• Exploration</li><li>• Openness</li></ul>	<b>JUDGMENT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical Thinking</li><li>• Thinking Things Through</li><li>• Open-mindedness</li></ul>	<b>LOVE OF LEARNING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mastering New Skills &amp; Topics</li><li>• Systematically Adding to Knowledge</li></ul>	<b>PERSPECTIVE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wisdom</li><li>• Providing Wise Counsel</li><li>• Taking the Big Picture View</li></ul>					
	<b>COURAGE</b>	<b>BRAVERY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Valor</li><li>• Not Shrinking from Fear</li><li>• Speaking Up for What's Right</li></ul>	<b>PERSEVERANCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Persistence</li><li>• Industry</li><li>• Finishing What One Starts</li></ul>	<b>HONESTY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Authenticity</li><li>• Integrity</li></ul>	<b>ZEST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vitality</li><li>• Enthusiasm</li><li>• Vigor</li><li>• Energy</li><li>• Feeling Alive</li></ul>					
		<b>HUMANITY</b>	<b>LOVE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Both Loving and Being Loved</li><li>• Valuing Close Relations with Others</li></ul>	<b>KINDNESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Generosity</li><li>• Nurturance</li><li>• Care &amp; Compassion</li><li>• Altruism</li><li>• "Niceness"</li></ul>				<b>SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aware of the Motives/ Feelings of Self/Others</li><li>• Knowing what Makes Other People Tick</li></ul>		
			<b>JUSTICE</b>	<b>TEAMWORK</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Citizenship</li><li>• Social Responsibility</li><li>• Loyalty</li></ul>				<b>FAIRNESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Just</li><li>• Not Letting Feelings Bias Decisions About Others</li></ul>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organizing Group Activities</li><li>• Encouraging a Group to Get Things Done</li></ul>	
				<b>TEMPERANCE</b>			<b>FORGIVENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mercy</li><li>• Accepting Others' Shortcomings</li><li>• Giving People a Second Chance</li></ul>	<b>HUMILITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modesty</li><li>• Letting One's Accomplishments Speak for Themselves</li></ul>	<b>PRUDENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Careful</li><li>• Cautious</li><li>• Not Taking Undue Risks</li></ul>	<b>SELF-REGULATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-Control</li><li>• Disciplined</li><li>• Managing Impulses &amp; Emotions</li></ul>
					<b>TRANSCENDENCE</b>		<b>APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY &amp; EXCELLENCE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awe</li></ul>	<b>GRATITUDE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thankful for the Good</li></ul>	<b>HOPE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimism</li><li>• Future-Mindedness</li></ul>	<b>HUMOR</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playfulness</li><li>• Bringing Smiles to</li></ul>





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# The Curious and Flourishing Schools - Positive Education in Building of Character Strengths and Virtues

Erasmus+ KA220  
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Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia 2022 – 2024

Lead organization: Institute for positive psychology, Novi Sad

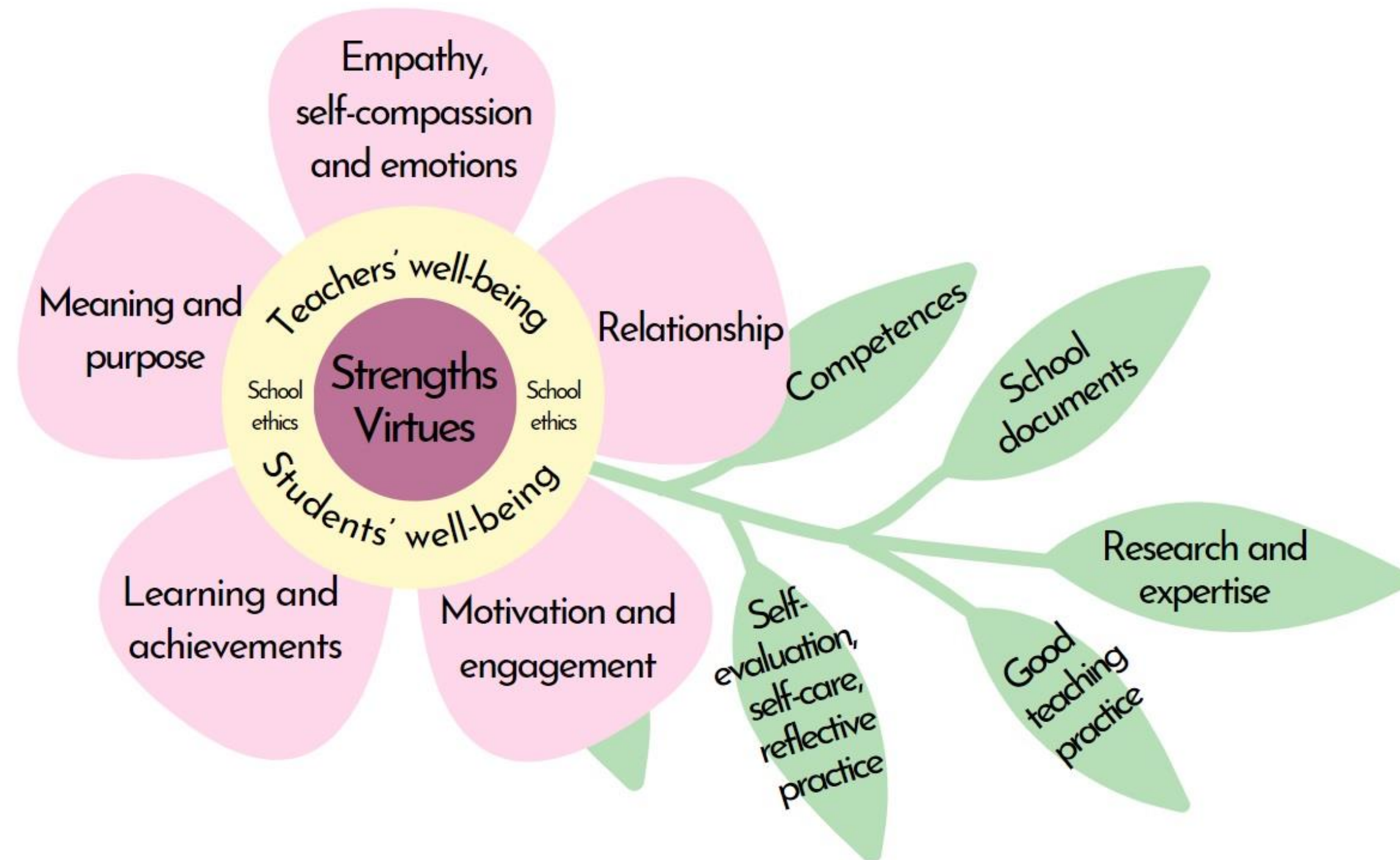
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# Institute for positive psychology model of PE (2023)



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