

Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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Greetings from the director

As we mark the ninth year of the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness, I find myself reflecting on both achievements and challenges. In times when our institution and the world around us face uncertainty and change, the Center's mission feels more vital than ever.

In moments like these, we are especially grateful to the Lee Kum Kee family. Their steadfast support ensures that, no matter what, we can continue our transformative work of building a rigorous and interdisciplinary science of positive health, happiness, and well-being with a focus on health equity, and translating the science to influence public health practice and policy.

To that end, we launched the inaugural Chester Pierce Symposium in fall 2024, gathering thought leaders from academia, business, and community organizations to discuss methods for fostering well-being in the face of adversity. Our "Environments for Health & Happiness Seminar Series" extended this conversation by examining how our built and natural environments influence well-being across the lifespan.

Our summer internship program, which received a record number of applicants, and our thriving Student Steering Committee both stand as pillars of our commitment to supporting future leaders and translating knowledge into action. Meanwhile, our Dissertation Research and Innovations in Positive Health Awards continue to foster innovative scholarship, supporting projects ranging from digital well-being to survivorship in prostate cancer.

Our ongoing collaborations—with the East Boston Social Centers, the Thich Nhat Hanh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Salaam Bombay Foundation in India, and, most recently, the Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law in Bhutan—demonstrate the real-world reach of our research as we strive to share the science of positive health, happiness, and well-being both locally and globally.

The importance of communicating and sharing research remains central to our work. Our new "Frontiers in Health & Happiness" podcast has extended our impact far beyond campus, bringing timely scholarship and strategies for well-being to listeners around the world.

These challenging times remind us all that positive health and happiness research, education, and advocacy are not luxuries, but necessities. Together, we look forward to continuing to share vital knowledge, inspire future leaders, and build a healthier and happier world for all.



With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "K. Viswanath".

K. "Vish" Viswanath, PhD
Director, Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness
Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication

Meet the Center's team

This year, we welcomed two additional members to our team. Karina Duffy, program and research coordinator, brings significant expertise in community engagement and has already played a key role in strengthening our partnerships. Our newest member, Kelsey Torres, assistant director, joins us with extensive experience in global health and is well-positioned to enhance our strategic development efforts.



Meet the Center's team



K. "Vish" Viswanath, PhD

Director, Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness
Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication



Kelsey Torres

Assistant Director of Operations



Ayla Fudala

Communications Coordinator



Karina Duffy

Program and Research Coordinator



Laura Marciano, PhD

Research Associate

Cultivating tomorrow's leaders

Student leadership and collaboration is at the heart of the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness' programming. Through opportunities such as our Summer Internship Program and Student Steering Committee, we empower students to become dynamic agents of change in health and well-being. Students gain invaluable, hands-on experience while building a vibrant and supportive community. These initiatives not only cultivate practical skills but also inspire a deep commitment to advancing public health and happiness.



Summer internship program

Each summer, the Center welcomes a diverse cohort of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students from across the country to participate in our 10-week internship program. Since the program's inception, the Center has hosted 50 interns, with 11 more in summer 2025. Under the mentorship of Center scholars and scientific affiliates, these talented interns examine timely and impactful public health questions in alignment with the Center's mission. Topics researched by interns in the summer of 2024 included the influence of school and community connectedness on well-being among schoolchildren in India; the relationship between loneliness and social media use in adolescents; and the effects of workplace environments on the mental, social, and physical well-being of workers.

Reflecting the program's growing reputation, applications have increased significantly in recent years. This surge in interest demonstrates the Center's expanding impact as a training ground for future researchers and advocates in positive health and well-being. By nurturing curiosity, providing hands-on experience, and building research skills, our internship program plays a vital role in preparing tomorrow's leaders to advance health and happiness science for years to come.



SUMMER 2024 INTERNS.

Reflections from summer 2024 interns



“Working and growing alongside positive health scholars, this summer has highlighted the importance of collaborative community efforts, demonstrating how collective action can create a more significant and lasting impact.”

Nikita Rohila

Bachelor of arts candidate in psychology and medicine, health, and society, Vanderbilt University; Host site: Dana-Farber Cancer Institute



“This internship introduced me to a research area that I am very passionate about and eager to continue working in throughout my career path, as I pursue becoming a neuropsychiatrist and health equity advocate.”

Kate Li

Master of public health candidate in neuroscience, bioethics, and health communication, Case Western Reserve University; Host site: Harvard Chan School



“Throughout the summer, I got to know inspiring and driven individuals from a wide breadth of academic and professional backgrounds, each with their own unique perspective and mission to improve health and happiness in humans. Through my acquaintance with them, I grew in my ability to imagine the scope of possibilities for world-changing work.”

Claire Dirks

Bachelor of arts candidate in psychology, Kenyon College; Host site: Harvard Business School



“This internship significantly impacted my understanding of the science of positive health, its relationship with community care, and the role of digital interventions in improving mental well-being. I gained a deeper appreciation for the role of interdisciplinary research and community-based interventions in addressing mental health challenges. This experience has equipped me with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue a career in public mental health and contribute to the development of innovative and effective interventions.”

Lekha Amin

Master of public health candidate in epidemiology, biostatistics, and mental health, Boston University; Host site: Harvard Chan School

Student steering committee

Since its launch in January 2023, the Center's Student Steering Committee (SSC) has brought together a dedicated group of Harvard University graduate students committed to advancing the science and practice of well-being on campus. Working closely with Center staff, these students created a series of workshops focused on practical, evidence-based strategies for fostering health and happiness. These workshops encourage SSC members to take the initiative to pursue their own unique interests, while cultivating a sense of belonging amongst the Harvard Chan community. Additionally, creating these workshops gives members the opportunity to develop practical skills such as public speaking and event planning.



2024-25 STUDENT STEERING COMMITTEE.

Over the past year, SSC members led sessions on subjects ranging from the mental and physical health benefits of time spent in nature, exercise, and social connectedness to harnessing the power of creative writing for emotional well-being. In total, the SSC has led 11 workshops—each designed to equip the Harvard community with actionable tools for improving daily life.

As we celebrate the SSC's accomplishments, we also bid a fond farewell to our graduating members, whose ingenuity and passion have left a lasting mark on the Center. Their enthusiastic participation and positive attitudes created a true sense of mutual support and belonging, which spread, through their workshops, to the broader Harvard community. Looking ahead, we are excited to recruit a new cohort of students in fall 2025, and eager to see what fresh ideas and unique perspectives they will bring to the Center.

Reflections from SSC members



“My experience on the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness Student Steering Committee gave me a true sense of community as I transitioned back to student life after working for a few years. The beauty of leading workshops related to the mission of the Center was that it was not just about sharing strategies for personal growth—it was about creating a space where genuine connection flourished.”

Laura Guay

Master of public health candidate in health and social behavior, Harvard Chan School;
Workshop title: “Conversations that Connect: Social Connections through Games”



“Having the opportunity to be a member of the Lee Kum Sheung Student Steering Committee was a highlight of my time at Harvard! Working to communicate the latest research-backed health and happiness info to the public was an incredibly meaningful experience, and getting to do so alongside Dr. Viswanath, Ayla, Karina, and the rest of the Student Steering Committee made it all the more special.”

Ayla Han

Master of education graduate in counseling, human development, and education, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Workshop title: “Thriving with Terrariums: Nurture Nature, Nurture Yourself”



“Being part of the Center Student Steering Committee has meant being surrounded by a genuinely kind and inspiring community. It’s given me a space to connect with others, reflect on what truly matters, and explore how happiness shows up in so many parts of life.”

Laura Torrent

Master of public health candidate in health and social behavior, Harvard Chan School;
Workshop title: “Happiness in Motion: The Power of Exercise”

Advancing happiness science: Investments in people and community

At the Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness, innovative research and global collaboration are critical to unlocking the full potential of well-being. By supporting bold ideas and fostering partnerships across disciplines and continents, the Center is advancing the science of happiness. The following examples showcase investments in emerging scholars, pioneering faculty, and community collaborations that are shaping the future of positive health and creating lasting impact worldwide.



Dissertation research awards

The Center's dissertation research awards support Harvard doctoral students conducting interdisciplinary research on the physical, mental, and social factors that contribute to well-being. Since the program's inception in 2017, 12 awards have been granted to students pursuing innovative, asset-based, and equity-driven projects in positive health science. Past awardees have explored topics such as the role of social support in health outcomes, psychological resilience across the lifespan, and the impact of community and environment on well-being. By investing in these promising scholars, the Center not only advances cutting-edge research and strengthens the pipeline of future leaders in positive health but also ensures that a diversity of perspectives and disciplines contribute to building healthier, more just communities for all.

2025 AWARDEE



COLLEEN MCGRATH

In 2025, the award was granted to Colleen McGrath, doctoral candidate in the Harvard Chan Department of Epidemiology, for her dissertation titled "Quality-of-Life, Morbidity, and Mortality in Prostate Cancer." Her research explores different aspects of prostate cancer survivorship, with a particular focus on minority groups. McGrath's work investigates long-term quality of life, as well as the incidence of cardiovascular disease and mortality—two major health challenges faced by survivors. A central component of her research is examining how social connectedness, including social integration and support from informal caregivers, impacts these survivorship outcomes.

Innovations in positive health grants

The Center's Innovations in Positive Health Grants are designed to support cutting-edge research by Harvard faculty, research scientists, and postdoctoral scholars, with a focus on advancing knowledge in positive health science as well as communication and translation sciences. Established in 2019, this program has provided seven awards to date, enabling scholars to pursue bold, early-stage projects that investigate how strengths, resources, and social environments contribute to well-being. By prioritizing interdisciplinary approaches and encouraging collaborations across Harvard, these grants help launch new research directions and build the foundations for large-scale studies on topics such as prosocial behavior, social cohesion, and equity in health outcomes. Through this strategic investment, the Center empowers scholarly exploration that deepens our understanding of positive health and informs evidence-based strategies for improving quality of life in diverse communities.

2025 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Motivation awareness in social media use and its impact on psychological well-being – an ecological momentary assessment study

Amit Goldenberg, assistant professor of business administration at Harvard Business School; Yuning Liu, doctoral student at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; and Yael Millgram, assistant professor at the School of Psychological Sciences, Tel Aviv University, received a Center seed grant award to support their project, "Motivation awareness in social media use and its impact on psychological well-being – an ecological momentary assessment study." This project investigates how users' awareness of their motivations for using social media influenced both their online behaviors and psychological well-being. Utilizing ecological momentary assessment and objective social media data, the team will explore the links between motivation awareness, patterns of social media activity, and mental health outcomes. The findings will aim to clarify the mechanisms connecting social media use and well-being, ultimately informing strategies for promoting psychological health in digital environments.



AMIT GOLDENBERG



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Yael MILLGRAM

Innovations in positive health grants

2025 GRANT RECIPIENTS

Impact of cerebral visual impairment on positive well-being

Corinna Bauer, assistant professor of radiology and ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School; Kim Willment, assistant professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School; and Anna-Maria Baglieri, instructor at Harvard Medical School, received a Center seed grant award to support their project, "Impact of cerebral visual impairment on positive well-being." This project will investigate how cerebral visual impairments (CVI) affect the quality of life and well-being of individuals with brain injuries, focusing on both early-onset and acquired cases. The team will explore the effects of CVI on daily activities and analyze its impact on caregivers' quality of life. The findings will inform strategies for early intervention and support to enhance well-being and quality of life for both individuals affected by CVI and their caregivers.



CORINNA BAUER



KIM WILLMENT



ANNA-MARIA BAGLIERI

Well-being through innovative collaborations

The Center fosters meaningful partnerships with organizations around the world to translate research into real-world impact. By working closely with community-based institutions, academic centers, and public health organizations, the Center supports the promotion of well-being across diverse populations. These collaborations are mutually beneficial, providing the Center with invaluable insights into community needs and feedback on our programming. The following examples showcase several ongoing and emerging collaborative efforts that illustrate how our research, when joined with community insights and global partnerships, contributes to transformative change.



East Boston Social Centers

In 2024-2025, the Center continued its collaboration with the East Boston Social Centers (EBSCs), an organization with over 100 years of history supporting immigrant families through education, public health, and social services. East Boston is a diverse, dynamic neighborhood of over 43,000 residents, many of whom are immigrants from Central and South America. Building on EBSCs' commitment to community well-being, our joint work focused on addressing the rising concern of loneliness and disconnection among older adults, an issue recently highlighted in the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on the epidemic of isolation.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE EBSC ACTIVE ADULTS PROGRAM. (PHOTO/EBSC)

In February 2024, EBSCs and the Lee Kum Sheung Center led two focus groups through their “Active Adults” program, which offers activities to help adults 55 and older stay healthy and active. These group discussions were facilitated by Rosanna Batista, former EBSCs director of data and evaluation, and Elaine Jeon, former Center research assistant and a graduate of Harvard Chan School’s master of public health program.

The focus groups, comprising mostly women over age 75 who have lived in East Boston for more than three decades, provided critical insights into community connection, belonging, and systemic barriers to social engagement. While participants expressed joy and deep pride in their neighborhood’s cultural diversity, several reported experiencing loneliness daily. Factors contributing to social isolation include living alone, widowhood, loss of local businesses, transportation gaps, and linguistic divides. Many stated their strongest community bonds were forged through the Active Adults program.

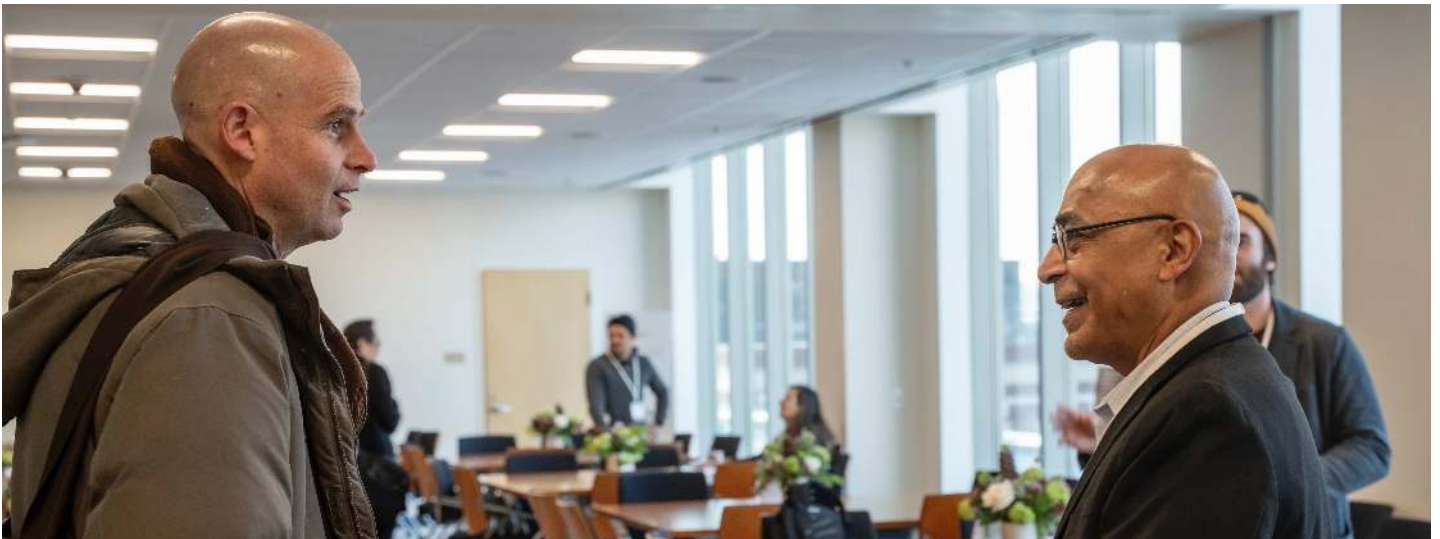
Thich Nhat Hanh Center for Mindfulness in Public Health

The Center continued its collaboration with Harvard Chan School's Thich Nhat Hanh (TNH) Center for Mindfulness in Public Health this year, a partnership rooted in shared goals of advancing contemplative practice and well-being through academic and public health frameworks. Since its inception in spring 2023, the TNH Center has worked to integrate mindfulness into evidence-based public health strategies.



THICH NHAT HANH
CENTER FOR MINDFULNESS IN PUBLIC HEALTH

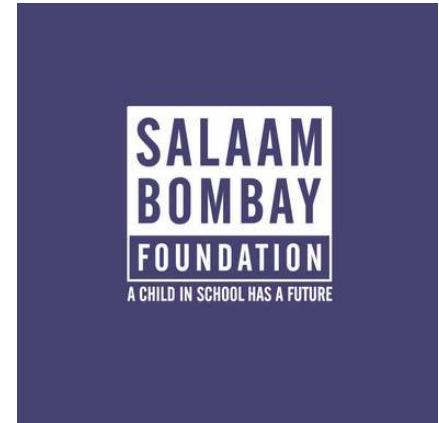
In 2025, Vish Viswanath, director of the Center, joined the TNH Center once again as a speaker at the “Mindful Communication to Enhance Nutrition and Planetary Health Symposium.” This invitation-only gathering brought together scholars, practitioners, and mindfulness teachers to examine how communication strategies can foster both personal well-being and global sustainability. Viswanath shared his research on health communication and its vital role in shaping collective and individual well-being, underscoring the social dimensions of public health and happiness. This ongoing exchange reflects the potential of interdisciplinary, transnational dialogues to inform and transform public health approaches rooted in compassion, mindfulness, and evidence.



BROTHER PHAP LUU OF DEER PARK MONASTERY AND VISH VISWANATH AT THE SYMPOSIUM. (PHOTO/TNH CENTER)

Salaam Bombay Foundation

Since 2019, the Center has partnered with the Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) in Mumbai, India, to better understand how life skills education influences youth well-being. SBF empowers adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds to stay in school, avoid tobacco use, and adopt healthy habits. Its programs offer extracurricular enrichment in health literacy, leadership, and resilience-building activities. The aim of this joint initiative is to conduct a longitudinal study examining how these types of interventions correlate with improved outcomes in health, happiness, and academic persistence.



Although the first wave of the study launched in 2020, COVID-19-related disruptions interrupted its continuity. The longitudinal study was relaunched in 2023 with a new cohort of over 3,000 seventh-grade students from Mumbai public schools. In 2024, the team conducted follow-up surveys with 2,602 students from the 2023 cohort, now in eighth grade, and also recruited a new cohort of 3,648 seventh-grade students. The research team will follow these students through their educational journey and early adulthood, seeking to assess how SBF program exposure—and broader life experiences—affect their long-term health and resilience. We are also analyzing trends between the 2020 and 2023 cohorts to understand the compounded impact of the pandemic on youth from low-income communities. This partnership reflects the Center's commitment to global engagement and the application of rigorous research to real-world challenges faced by vulnerable populations.



STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN SBF PROGRAMMING. (PHOTO/SBF)

Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law Wellbeing Centre

In 2024, the Center began developing a promising new relationship with the Wellbeing Centre at the Jigme Singye Wangchuck (JSW) School of Law in Bhutan. Designed as a community space for students to foster well-being, cultivate resilience, and exchange ideas, the Wellbeing Centre includes two lounges located near student residences. These spaces encourage informal conversations, mindfulness practice, academic support, and social connection—essential ingredients for student happiness and holistic success. Programming will be led by the student affairs and faculty services departments, in collaboration with dedicated faculty and student-led initiatives.

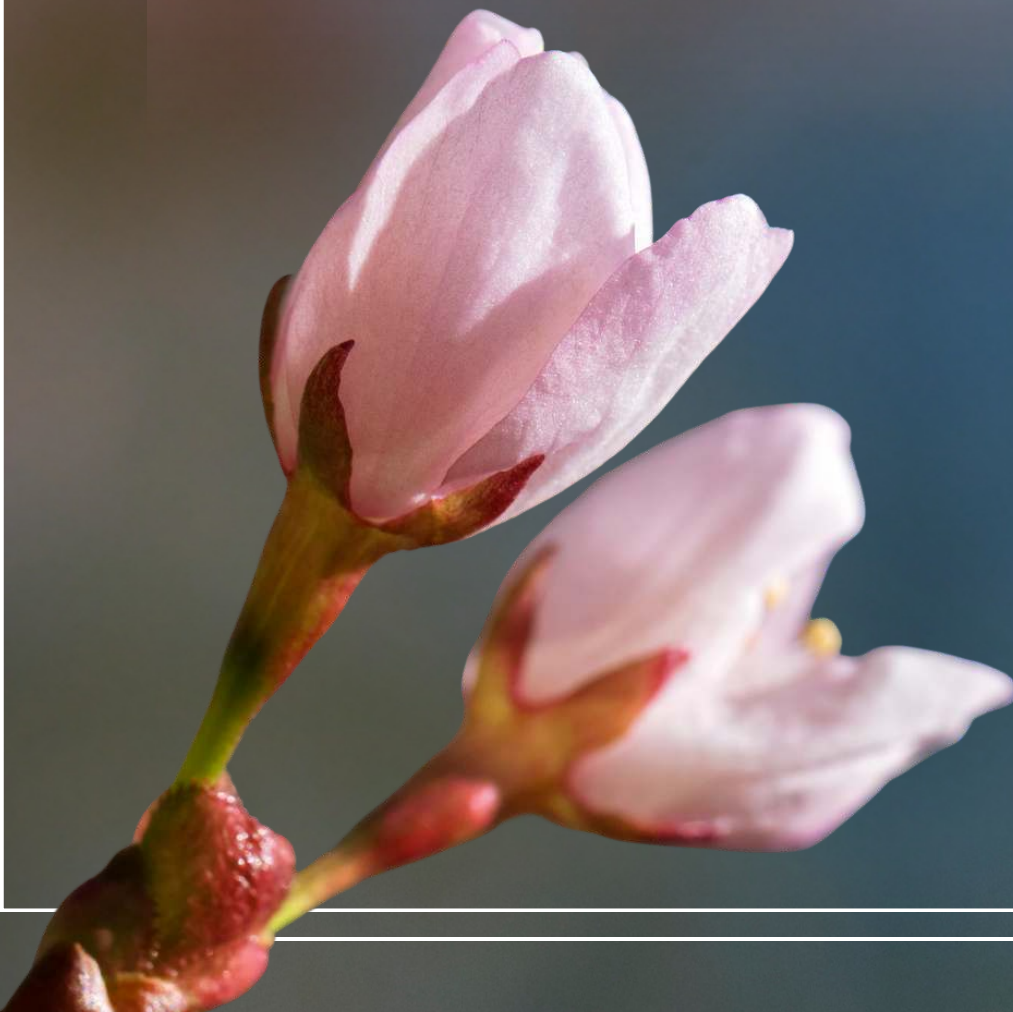


STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN WELLBEING CENTRE PROGRAMMING. (PHOTO/JSW SCHOOL OF LAW)

In addition to hosting activities such as mindfulness workshops, mentorship groups, and skill-building sessions, the Wellbeing Centre emphasizes creating a nurturing environment where students can thrive both academically and emotionally. We are currently building a collaborative relationship with Yeshe Lhamo, a faculty member at the JSW School of Law and a key leader of the Wellbeing Centre. This partnership deepens our shared goal of creating institutions where happiness, health, and learning flourish together.

Engaging audiences, amplifying impact

As new discoveries in health and happiness emerge, sharing knowledge beyond academia becomes essential. This year, the Center launched dynamic initiatives—including the first Chester Pierce Symposium, a forward-thinking seminar series, and the Frontiers in Health & Happiness podcast—to spark conversations and make research actionable. By bringing findings to diverse audiences, we help transform evidence into meaningful impact in public health, policy, and daily life.



Inaugural Chester Pierce Symposium



The Center was proud to host the inaugural Chester Pierce Symposium on November 12, 2024. This event honored the legacy of Chester Pierce—renowned psychiatrist, civil rights advocate, and social justice pioneer—who was the first African American to graduate from the Massachusetts General Hospital Psychiatry Residency Program. Pierce held longstanding academic appointments across Harvard’s medical, education, and public health schools, including 14 years in the Department of Health and Social Behavior (now Social and Behavioral Sciences), where the Center is based. With the theme “Well-being in the Face of Adversity,” this gathering brought together scholars and practitioners from academia, civil society, and business to examine how individuals and communities can foster resilience amidst mounting challenges, from systemic racism and political divides to the global climate crisis.

The day’s program opened with welcoming remarks by Jane Kim, then-interim dean of the faculty, and an introduction by Vish Viswanath, director of the Center. David Williams, professor at the Harvard Chan School and a scholar renowned for his pioneering work on the social determinants of health—particularly regarding the impact of race, racism, stress, and socioeconomic status on health and well-being outcomes—delivered the keynote lecture, “Racism and Health: Understanding Its Threats, Mobilizing Defenses.” Panel one, “Resilience in Times of Adversity,” featured Nancy Michael, neuroscientist at the University of Notre Dame, and Julia Hotz, author. The discussion was moderated by Brittney Francis, research scientist at François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University. Panel two, “Flourishing Amidst Climate Change,” brought together Elizabeth Pinsky, MD, of Massachusetts General Hospital, and Heather White, founder of One Green Thing. The panel was moderated by Christie Denckla, assistant professor at Harvard Chan School. Panel three, “Happy in the Workplace,” focused on cultivating environments that support positive employee well-being. It was moderated by Erika Sabbath, associate professor at Boston College, and featured Glorian Sorensen, research professor at Harvard Chan School, and Jonathan Isaacson, CEO of The Gem Group.

The Chester Pierce Symposium highlighted the vital need for interdisciplinary collaboration to face adversity with community and purpose—setting the stage for future events that continue to build on this powerful conversation.



DAVID WILLIAMS



JANE KIM



VISH VISWANATH



EMRY BREEDLOVE

Environments for Health and Happiness seminar series

The Center's annual seminar series aims to spotlight pertinent public health issues by inviting experts to share their discoveries and insights with the public, fostering both awareness and action. Over the past nine years, we have hosted 60 seminars.

This academic year, the Center's seminar series was titled "Environments for Health and Happiness" and explored how natural and built environments impact well-being. As urbanization and climate change increasingly affect daily life, the series emphasized the importance of designing resilient, equitable, and sustainable communities. Throughout the fall and spring semesters, we brought together experts from diverse fields—including urban planning, public health, and environmental science—to share research, practical insights, and innovative approaches to enhancing health and happiness through thoughtful environmental design.



SEMINAR PRESENTED BY GAURAB BASU

Environments for Health and Happiness seminar series



Jo Ivey Boufford, clinical professor of global health at the NYU School of Global Public Health, opened the seminar series with a talk titled “Cities as drivers for global health and happiness.” She examined how urban areas—where much of the global population now resides—are uniquely positioned to advance health and equity by transforming the built, social, economic, and physical environments. Drawing on examples from diverse regions, she highlighted cities' growing role as effective agents of public health progress.



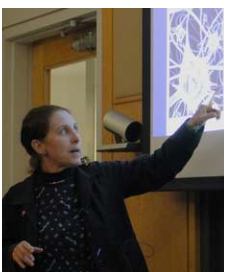
The second installment of the series featured Joseph Allen, associate professor of exposure assessment science at the Harvard Chan School and director of the Healthy Buildings Program. His talk focused on the hidden power of indoor spaces in shaping our well-being, underscoring how elements like air quality, ventilation, and building design directly influence mental and physical health. He called attention to the opportunity for healthier building environments to become a central pillar of sustainable public health strategies moving forward.



In the third seminar, Gaurab Basu, assistant professor in the Department of Environmental Health at the Harvard Chan School and a practicing physician, addressed the intersection of climate change and health in a talk titled “Responding to climate change – challenges and opportunities for mental health and well-being.” He explored how climate-related disruptions affect both individual and collective well-being, particularly among vulnerable communities. Rather than viewing the climate crisis solely as a threat, Basu reframed it as a chance to create more equitable, health-promoting systems.



The fourth session featured Lindsey Burghardt, chief science officer at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. She shared insights into how children’s developmental outcomes are shaped from the very beginning by the environments they inhabit—homes, schools, neighborhoods—and the relationships they experience within them. Burghardt made a compelling case for reimagining these environments through a systemic lens, including the impacts of climate change and structural inequities, to ensure all children can thrive.

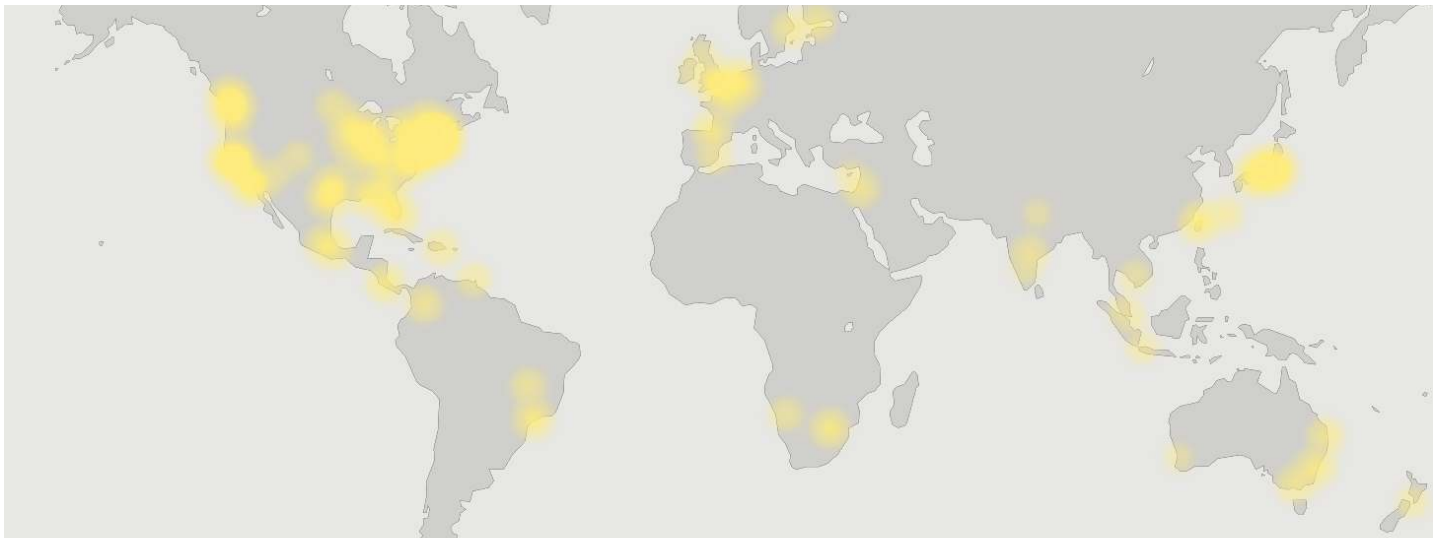
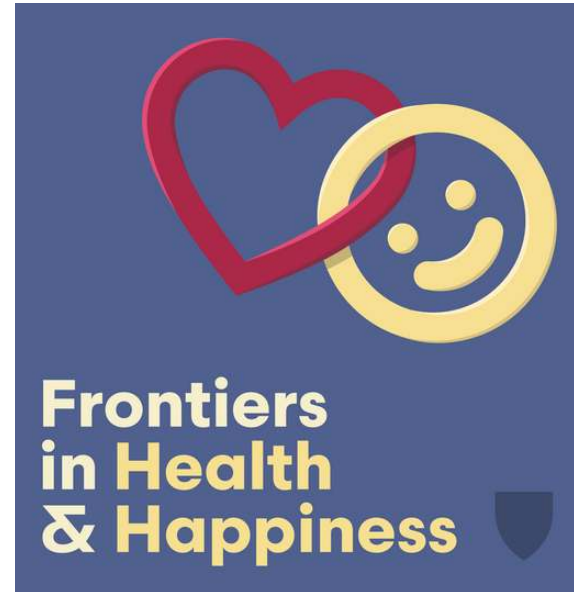


Concluding the series was architect and author Ann Sussman, who offered a fresh perspective on how design influences human health—with the brain as the gateway. Drawing on biometric research and neuroscience, she demonstrated that our brains respond subconsciously to the built environment, favoring detail-rich spaces over featureless ones. Her talk illustrated how these insights can transform architectural practice and inform healthier, more engaging public spaces.

Podcast launch: Frontiers in Health & Happiness

Launched in October 2024, the “Frontiers in Health & Happiness” podcast runs alongside our seminar series and furthers the Center’s mission to translate the science of positive health, happiness, and well-being. Hosted by Ayla Fudala, communications coordinator for the Center, the podcast features interviews with the same expert speakers from our past two seminar themes: loneliness and well-being and environments for health and happiness.

As of August 2025, we have released 10 episodes, reaching listeners worldwide and garnering more than 2,650 downloads in 65 countries. Season one features thought leaders like Julianne Holt-Lunstad and Ichiro Kawachi, who explore the health effects of loneliness and strategies for fostering social connection. Season two examines how our environments—both natural and built—influence physical and mental well-being, with insights from experts such as Gaurab Basu and Lindsey Burghardt. By making complex research accessible and engaging, the podcast serves as a key tool for bringing positive health science to global audiences.



MAP OF PODCAST LISTENERS. (IMAGE/SIMPLECAST)

Scholarly impact: 2024-2025

Breakthroughs in well-being emerge when rigorous research meets real-world relevance. This year, Center faculty and affiliates produced transformative studies spanning digital media, mental health, loneliness, optimism, workplace well-being, climate change, and healthy aging. These findings are shaping practices, policies, and perspectives—empowering clinicians, educators, and communities to support happier, healthier lives at every stage. Included are highlights from a year of impactful discovery and innovation.



Scholarly impact: 2024–2025

A chapter in a recently published book on digital media, cognition, and brain development in adolescence, written by Vish Viswanath, director of the Center, and Laura Marciano, research associate, with other contributors, recommends that clinicians personalize guidance on digital media use for adolescents, policymakers enhance transparency and regulate harmful content, and educators foster digital literacy and resilience while supporting healthy, individualized digital media habits.

[Learn more: doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69362-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69362-5)

Vish Viswanath, director of the Center, conducted a study that found volunteer-based, peer-led mental health interventions in low-income Indian schools significantly improved students' mental health knowledge, attitudes, and intentions to seek care, and reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms, suggesting that community-driven, youth-led approaches can help address gaps in adolescent mental health support.

[Learn more: doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2024.11.098](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2024.11.098)

Center affiliates Eric Kim and Tyler Vanderweele, along with former seminar speaker Julianne Holt-Lunstad, conducted a study showing that increased loneliness during adolescence is linked to worse mental health, psychological well-being, social outcomes, and some physical health outcomes in adulthood, highlighting the importance of addressing adolescent loneliness to support long-term health.

[Learn more: doi: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2024.12.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2024.12.011)

Center affiliates Francine Grodstein, David Williams, and others found that higher optimism in postmenopausal women was associated with slower age-related declines in walking speed and chair stand ability over six years, suggesting that optimism may help maintain physical functioning as women age.

[Learn more: doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.5068](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.5068)

Scholarly impact continued: 2024–2025

Jennifer Lerner, a Center affiliate, conducted a study funded by last year's Innovations in Positive Health Grant that found a scalable reappraisal intervention for low- and middle-income U.S. workers led to lasting improvements in emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and workplace performance six months later, demonstrating its effectiveness as an accessible strategy for enhancing worker well-being.

Learn more: [doi: 10.31234/osf.io/scwxt_v1](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/scwxt_v1)

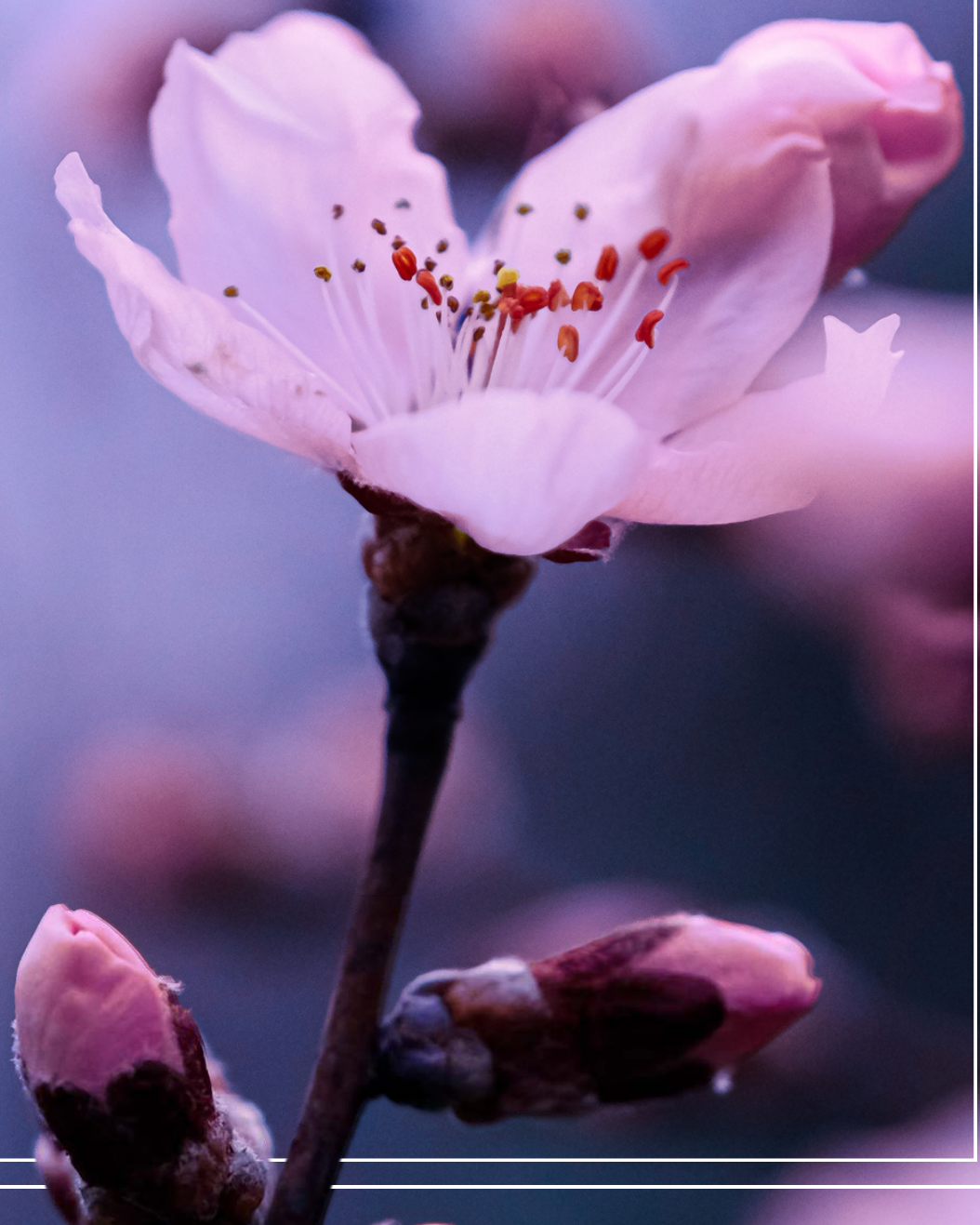
Center affiliates Christy Denckla, Karestan Koenen, and others conducted a study showing that chronic, slow-onset climate change—such as droughts and rising temperatures—is associated with increased depression, anxiety, and psychological distress.

Learn more: [doi: 10.1038/s44220-023-00170-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s44220-023-00170-5)

Robert Waldinger, a Center affiliate, found that among healthy older adults, a stronger positivity bias in memory—preferring positive over neutral information—is associated with greater white matter integrity in frontal brain regions, suggesting neural underpinnings for this bias.

Learn more: [doi: 10.1007/s11682-024-00850-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11682-024-00850-5)

Looking into the future of
health and happiness:
The Center's evolution



Looking into the future of health and happiness: The Center's evolution

This year, as Harvard Chan School and the wider world navigated complex challenges, the Center remained steadfast in advancing the science of positive health, happiness, and well-being. We deepened our work by highlighting not just physical and mental health, but also the profound influence of social and environmental factors on overall well-being.

Through the launch of the inaugural Chester Pierce Symposium, the Environments for Health & Happiness Seminar Series, and the introduction of our Frontiers in Health & Happiness podcast, we created new spaces for dialogue, learning, and the dissemination of research well beyond campus walls. Our collaborations—with partners from East Boston to Mumbai to Bhutan—underscored the global relevance of our work and the real-world difference that positive health research and advocacy can make for diverse communities.

As we look ahead, we will continue to deepen our exploration of the many factors—social, environmental, and structural—that shape well-being, redouble our support for emerging leaders and innovative thinkers, and share our findings widely to help build healthier, happier, and more equitable communities.

Now more than ever, the Center's mission feels essential. With the continued generosity of our partners and the passion of our team, we look forward to facing the future together.



LEE KUM SHEUNG
CENTER FOR
HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

HARVARD T.H. CHAN
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH