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wellbeing

SCIENCE IN ACTION

How connection and a few minutes of wellbeing help changemakers and teens thrive in the world today.



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Keep calm, check facts
A steady mind resists disinformation

AI as a bridge
Tech that leads us back to people

2,300 healthcare workers
prove wellbeing can be trained

Every 10 minutes counts
Easing caregiver stress

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humin

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A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

A new name. More wellbeing science. Worth the wait.

The last time this publication reached you, it carried the name Healthy Minds Innovations. Since then, we became Humin, pronounced “human,” from human + within, reflecting a profound truth: Everything we need to flourish is already within us.

We took the time to make that change well, and held this issue until it could carry the full story. It gathers the most important wellbeing research of the past year in one place.

Wellbeing: Behind the Science is now *Wellbeing: Science in Action*, because the research no longer stays in the lab. It lives in classrooms, hospitals, retreats, and the phone in your pocket.

Everything we need to flourish is already within us

ABOUT HUMIN

Humin is a global nonprofit that translates decades of scientific research into products, services, and insights so that people, organizations, and communities everywhere can thrive.



FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dr. Richie Davidson

For nearly fifty years, I've followed one question: Why do some people bend under life's hardest moments while others find their footing? The answer our science keeps returning is a hopeful one. Wellbeing is a skill. It can be learned, it can be measured, and it spreads from one person to the people around them.

This edition carries that idea into the world. You'll meet healthcare providers in Mexico who trained their minds and felt measurably less distress, teachers who chose to stay in the classroom, and teens who can tell us, in a single text, how connected they feel.

Our new name says what the research has shown me again and again. Thank you for helping us make that real for more people.



Dr. Richard J. Davidson

Founder, Humin
Founder & Director, Center for Healthy Minds, UW–Madison



FROM OUR CEO

Christina Glavas

Welcome to the first edition of *Wellbeing: Science in Action* under our new name. A lot has changed since we last wrote. Healthy Minds Innovations became Humin, and with the name came a sharper promise: making wellbeing real for everyone, everywhere.

That promise asks more of us than good research. It asks us to put the science where people live and work. This year we launched Humin for Education, because a flourishing teacher creates a flourishing classroom. We measured what a wellness retreat gives its guests. And we kept our tools free for people in more than 140 countries.

Whether you lead a company, a school, a lab, or simply your own day, we hope these pages inspire you with what's possible. We're glad you're here.



Christina Glavas

Chief Executive Officer, Humin

THIS ISSUE'S FEATURED SCIENTISTS & CONTRIBUTORS



Dr. Richard J. Davidson
Founder, Humin
Founder & Director, CHM



Christina Glavas
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Dr. Raquel Tatar
Chief Science Officer, Humin



Dr. Tammi R. A. Kral
Director of Science, Humin



Dr. Cortland Dahl
Chief Contemplative Officer, Humin



Ivan Hernandez
Editor, *Wellbeing: Science in Action*

Insights from the field

Research insights from across the field of wellbeing science that speak directly to the moment we're living in.

Calm is a quiet defense against disinformation

How we feel shapes what we believe, and what we bother to double-check.

A qualitative study of young adults in Germany and the Netherlands asked how emotions shape who falls for disinformation, especially in moments of crisis and chaos. Those who felt calm and confident were found to be more careful in verifying facts. Anger and discontent, by contrast, pulled people toward resignation and a greater chance of believing what wasn't true.

Negative emotions weren't always a weakness, though. Paired with critical thinking, they could make people more resistant to disinformation.

WHY IT MATTERS

Our information environment is built to overwhelm us. Helping people stay grounded under pressure is part of media literacy, and a real lever for anyone designing teams, organizations, tools, classrooms, or campaigns that build resilience and cultivate discernment.



Try this. Before you share information or a social post, take one slow breath. Feeling calm will help you best discern information.

READ THE STUDY

So Emotional? The Role of Emotions for Young Adults' Resilience to Disinformation

AI can ease loneliness, as long as it leads us back to each other

A narrative review weighs what AI does for our wellbeing, connection, and personal growth.

From rule-based chatbots to today's large language models, structured AI tools were found to bring real short-term relief: less anxiety, stress, and loneliness, more self-esteem, and a lift in learning and social confidence. AI companions also showed early promise for temporary emotional support.

Because AI risks like emotional dependence, weaker human ties, eroding social skills, and poor handling of crisis moments still exist, it is critical to note that these structured tools helped most when they supported human relationships rather than replaced them.

Try this. Use AI as a bridge, not a destination. Let it nudge you to call a friend.

WHY IT MATTERS

AI now shapes how millions of people seek comfort. Knowing where helpful use ends and harmful use begins is one of wellbeing science's most urgent questions.

READ THE STUDY

Human 2.0? AI and the Future of Wellbeing, Connection, and Personal Growth: A Narrative Review

Turns out you can be surrounded by people, yet still feel alone

8,000
adults aged 50+ in England

13 yrs
of follow-up

A large cohort study followed nearly 8,000 adults aged 50+ in England for more than 13 years to measure the gap between having lots of people in your life and still feeling lonely.

That mismatch, called social asymmetry, was linked to higher risk of cardiovascular disease, COPD, and death from any cause. The link between social asymmetry and these health risks held after accounting for smoking, activity levels, and other health factors.



WHY IT MATTERS

Connection is a health need, not a nicety. Measuring the gap between how connected people are and how connected they feel gives clinicians and communities a sharper way to spot who is at risk, including people who look well connected on paper.

READ THE STUDY

Social Asymmetry and Risk of Morbidity and Mortality



Try this. No time for a long practice? Start with 10 minutes a week and build toward 50. Every added 10 minutes counts.

WHY IT MATTERS

Modest, flexible practice can lighten a heavy load. The challenge for digital wellbeing tools is reaching the people who are most stretched, when they have the least to give.

Small doses of daily wellbeing practice can ease caregiver stress

8 **point drop in perceived stress** on a validated scale for caregivers who practiced about 50 minutes a week

The more caregivers practiced, the more their stress fell. In a study of family caregivers supporting people living with dementia, every additional 10 minutes of weekly practice using Humin's Healthy Minds Program app was tied to a drop in perceived stress, a possible dose-response relationship.

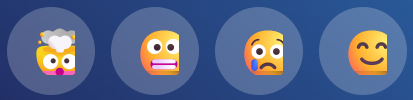
App use varied widely. Many caregivers practiced far less than the roughly 50 minutes a week linked to the biggest benefit, a sign that overwhelm itself can stand between people and the tools that could help them. Even so, modest, flexible practice measurably eased the load.

READ THE STUDY

Digital Mindfulness App Utilization and Perceived Stress Among Caregivers of Persons Living With Dementia · Featured: Dr. Raquel Tatar

SHORT READ

The emoji effect: One tiny face can make or break health advice



Can a single 😬 change how you read a health warning? It can, but not automatically. A mixed-methods study of negative emojis in public health posts on social media found the effect depended on how relevant the emoji was to the words beside it.

Why it matters: Health guidance competes with endless feeds. The right emotional tone, down to a single character, can decide whether it lands.

Read the study: Strategic Use of Negative Emojis in Messaging-Based Interventions for Public Health Communication on Social Media: Mixed Methods Study

Science at work

How Humin and our partners put wellbeing science to work in a variety of settings, across key sectors that can impact wellbeing systemically.

Teachers who train in wellbeing are 6x more likely to stay

A promising study with our partners at the Center for Healthy Minds found that teachers who learned awareness and connection practices in a weekly, in-person, semester-long course were six times more likely to stay teaching over four years. That makes wellbeing training a practical retention tool. The training also delivered 2–3 times the behavioral impact of standard professional development with just 5–10 minutes a day from participants.

425K

U.S. teaching positions vacant or held by uncertified teachers

6x

more likely to still be teaching four years later, in a randomized trial

2–3x

the behavioral impact of standard professional development



READ THE INSIGHTS AND STUDIES

State Teacher Shortages 2026 Update: Teaching Positions Left Vacant or Filled by Teachers Without Full Certification | Mindfulness and Connection Training During Preservice Teacher Education Reduces Early Career Teacher Attrition Four Years Later · Featured: Dr. Richard J. Davidson | A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Smartphone-Based Wellbeing Training in Public School System Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic · Featured: Dr. Cortland Dahl, Dr. Richard J. Davidson

Teacher wellbeing raises test scores

Wellbeing is contagious. A recent study shows that strengthening the inner capacities of the adult in the room may affect more than that adult's wellbeing.



850
public school teachers

4 wks
of wellbeing training

6 mo
impact held at follow-up

The 850 teachers who completed the assigned wellbeing training saw stress, anxiety, and depression drop as their wellbeing rose, and those benefits held at six months.

The bigger surprise was in their classrooms. Their students never trained, yet their test scores rose anyway, just from being in the room with them.

WELLBEING IN EDUCATION MATTERS

When teachers flourish, students learn more and schools keep the people they've invested in. Wellbeing becomes a retention strategy with a measurable return.

Be the first to see the full findings when they publish.

* Study in progress by research partner Center for Healthy Minds, UW–Madison.

SIGN UP AT HUMIN.ORG/EDUCATION

HUMIN FOR EDUCATION

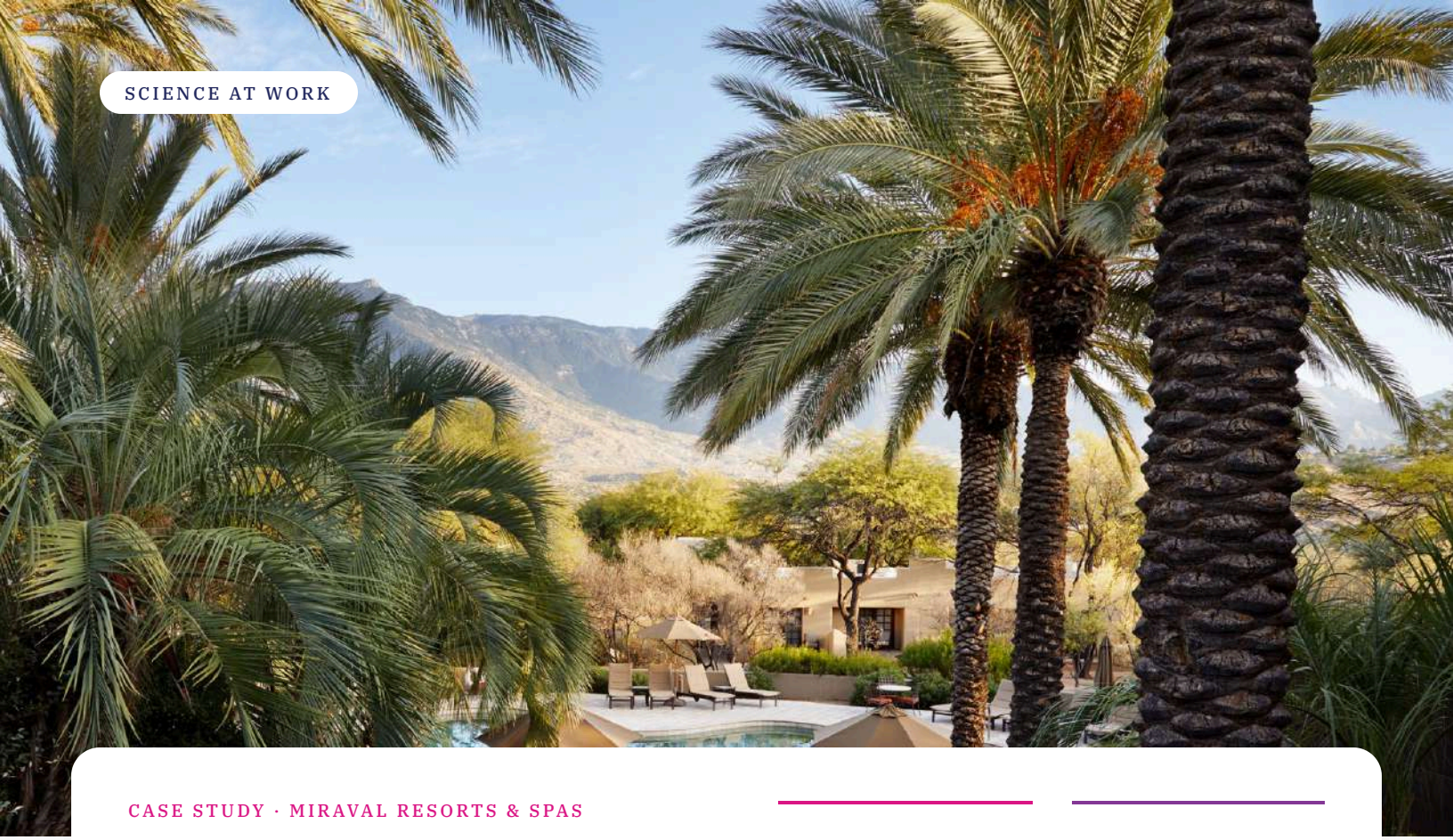
A flourishing teacher creates a flourishing classroom

Humin translates scientific results like these into practical tools for educators. Our work starts with a dashboard built on each district's own data, and shows how staff can be supported and where retention can improve.

1 Free consultation
2 Data-informed design plan
3 Implementation
4 Long-term evaluation & scaling

Talk to an education expert

GET IN TOUCH



CASE STUDY · MIRAVAL RESORTS & SPAS

Do wellness retreats work? Guests were still thriving two months after checkout

Miraval Resorts & Spas, a Hyatt brand with three locations, asked a bold question: Are we really making a difference? Over several months, Humin surveyed guests before and after visits averaging three nights, matching intentions to outcomes with validated measures timed never to interrupt a stay.

Gentle time with rescued or retired horses stood out as especially powerful. Longer stays brought greater benefits, and guests who came with a partner or group saw stronger gains in connection, a pillar of the Healthy Minds Framework.

READ THE STUDY

Case Study: Do Wellness Retreats Really Work? · Featured: Dr. Tammi Kral

10%

average reduction in guest stress

30%

additional stress reduction for every extra night

60 days

wellbeing gains, including lower stress and greater mindfulness, lasted up to 60 days after guests went home

WHY IT MATTERS

For hospitality and wellness leaders, this is what evidence looks like: clear data on what truly supports guests, and the confidence to invest in it.

From lab to life

The latest research advancements and achievements from Humin scientists and the Center for Healthy Minds.

In 12 weeks, 2,300 healthcare providers demonstrated that wellbeing can be trained

2,300+
providers

12 wks
of training

6 mo
of lasting gains

In a large randomized controlled trial, more than 2,300 healthcare providers across seven Mexican states received a 12-week program or a place on a wait list. The program, the Integrated Stress Toolbox, paired weekly live Zoom sessions with Humin's Healthy Minds Program app. The Center for Healthy Minds participated in this study with the Mexican nonprofit AtentaMente and Harvard.

Four weeks after training, the program group showed significantly lower distress than the control group. The difference held six months after training. They also grew in awareness, connection, insight, and purpose, with less burnout.



The takeaway. Treat wellbeing like a skill. The gains kept growing six months later.

WHY IT MATTERS

Healthcare workers carry everyone else's care. A scalable digital program that eases their distress, and keeps working, protects clinicians and the patients who depend on them. Researchers note that wellbeing skill gains may drive the lasting relief.

READ THE STUDY

Digital Wellbeing Training With Health Care Professionals · Featured: Dr. Richard J. Davidson

One text, one minute: A new way to hear how teens are really doing

What if checking in on a teenager took one text and less than a minute? Humin scientists developed and validated single-question surveys grounded in the Healthy Minds Framework, refined them with teen feedback, then texted 156 participants three times a day for eight days.

The results demonstrated how ultra-brief questions, answered in under a minute, kept participant burden low while reliably tracking how teens' wellbeing shifts through the day.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most wellbeing tracking measures stress and symptoms. These questions capture skills-based wellbeing outside clinical settings, at low burden and at scale, opening the door to real-time tools that help teens build those skills.

TWO QUESTIONS THAT WORKED

How much did you notice how you were feeling emotionally before we asked?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all — Very much

How connected to others did you feel in the past 10 min?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all — Very much

Questions verbatim from the study, answered on a rating scale. Scale labels and selections illustrative.

READ THE STUDY

Development and Validation of Single-Item Experience Sampling Measures of Wellbeing in Teens · Featured: Dr. Tammi Kral, Dr. Richard J. Davidson, Dr. Raquel Tatar

Can technology teach empathy? A small but real yes.



Can apps, virtual reality, and video games train empathy in adults? A meta-analysis led by the Center for Healthy Minds and the University of Michigan pooled 24 randomized controlled trials with 3,137 participants and found a small but statistically significant effect. Digital tools didn't yet beat active, therapeutically designed controls like cognitive behavioral therapy.

WHY IT MATTERS

Empathy can be trained at scale, and the bar for doing it well is becoming clearer. It's the challenge the whole digital wellbeing field, Humin included, is working to meet.

READ THE STUDY

The Effectiveness of Digital Interventions for Enhancing Empathy in Adults: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials



A gentle signal to the sleeping brain deepens rest

Slow wave activity is the deep-sleep brain pattern tied to memory and restorative sleep. A UW–Madison-led team, including the Center for Healthy Minds and partners in five countries, tested whether a non-invasive technique could boost it. In this interim analysis, 28 healthy adults paired it with Humin's Healthy Minds Program meditation or a sham version for four weeks, tracked by overnight EEG.

Deep-sleep activity increased during stimulation and stayed higher after it stopped. The gains during stimulation were linked to people rating their sleep as more restorative.

The takeaway. A gentle, non-invasive technique may help deepen sleep, the restorative stage tied to memory.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is the first evidence that this non-invasive technique meaningfully deepens sleep in healthy adults, a promising path for memory, recovery, and everyday restoration.

READ THE STUDY

Enhancement of Sleep Slow Wave Activity Using Transcranial Electrical Stimulation With Temporal Interference: An Interim Analysis of the STRENGTHEN Study · Featured: Dr. Richard J. Davidson



Before you scale a wellbeing program, test who it fits

Young sexual and gender minorities face disproportionate stress, often tied to discrimination. Could a meditation app help? A team led by NYU's Stephanie Cook, with Humin and the Center for Healthy Minds, taught awareness, connection, and purpose through Humin's Healthy Minds Program app to 72 participants, nearly all people of color, tracked daily for five days.

The team tested the program's parts one at a time. Connection practices first showed a signal of easing discrimination-related stress, and participants asked for instructors who reflect their identities.

Try this. Start with connection. It was the first skill to show a stress-easing signal.

WHY IT MATTERS

A tool built for everyone may miss those under the most strain. Testing parts with the community first shows what to keep before investing at scale.

READ THE STUDY

A Daily Digital Mindfulness Meditation to Reduce Stress from Discrimination Among Racially Diverse Sexual and Gender Minorities: Preparation Phase of the Multi-Phase Optimization Strategy (MOST) · Featured: Dr. Raquel Tatar

So what do meditation apps really do?

A review in American Psychologist, led by Carnegie Mellon and Center for Healthy Minds researchers, finds science lags the app boom (more than 2,500 meditation apps launched between 2015 and 2020 alone). Trials show modest but consistent drops in depression and anxiety. The catch was that most users drifted away within 30 days.

300M+

total downloads of the 10 most popular meditation apps (2024)

WHY IT MATTERS

The meditation app promise is real, but so is the retention gap. Closing it is the next frontier for every digital wellbeing tool.

READ THE STUDY

The Meditation App Revolution

Hard moments in meditation, and what they really mean

Do hard moments in meditation come from the practice itself? In two randomized trials of Humin's Healthy Minds Program app led by Center for Healthy Minds scientists, 28% of distressed college students and 10% of distressed adults reported a difficult experience, usually lasting a day or less. In the adult trial, rates were the same whether or not people did the guided meditations.

90% of those who reported a hard moment were **still glad they learned to meditate**

WHY IT MATTERS

Hard moments were just as common among people who skipped the meditations. These instances likely reflect stress people already carried, not harm from the practice.

READ THE STUDY

Prevalence and Predictors of Self-Reported Adverse Experiences in Digital Meditation Training · Featured: Dr. Raquel Tatar, Dr. Richard J. Davidson

Meditate while you fold the laundry? It counts.

Commuting, cooking, and folding laundry are all active guided practices that can turn everyday tasks into wellbeing training. Using Humin's Healthy Minds Program app data from 26,532 users and a 248-person clinical trial, Humin and Center for Healthy Minds scientists found active practices made up 38% and 28% of sessions, respectively, with benefits of active meditation similar to those of seated practice.

WHY IT MATTERS

You don't need a cushion or a quiet room for a wellbeing session. Practice that fits real routines puts wellbeing within reach of busy lives.

READ THE STUDY

Sitting and Active Meditation Practice: Utilization and Associations with Outcomes in Naturalistic and Clinical Trial Data · Featured: Dr. Cortland Dahl, Dr. Raquel Tatar, Dr. Richard J. Davidson

In my element

How a scientist sees the world with Humin founder Dr. Richie Davidson



Dr. Richie Davidson in his lab at UW–Madison, 1984. The questions started here.

Fifty years of asking why some of us bend, and others break

Marking 50 years in science, Humin founder Dr. Richie Davidson reflects on a career spent showing flourishing can be studied as rigorously as disease.

A founding figure in the science of emotion and among the most impactful scientists in the world, Dr. Richie built his career by crossing lines. He worked with more than 15 departments at a single university, from asthma researchers to epigeneticists, chasing one question: Why are some people more vulnerable to hardship, and others more resilient?

Clinical science, he argues, has long studied pathology and neglected flourishing. Mental health is more than the absence of illness. Flourishing, as he defines it, is an innate capacity all humans share, one that, like any skill, grows fully only with training. Work on the epigenetics of meditation and the biology of compassion training shows flourishing deserves the same rigor.

Dr. Richie's advice for the next generation.

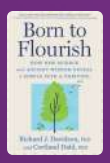
Read widely.

Don't let skepticism stop you.

Treat good collaborators as the rare gift they are.

WHY IT MATTERS

Today's global wellbeing challenges make this kind of ambitious, cross-disciplinary science more urgent than ever.



HIS NEW BOOK: BORN TO FLOURISH

Flourishing is a learnable skill: four practices, five minutes a day. Co-written with Dr. Cortland Dahl. Learn more

READ THE ESSAY

Reflections on a Highly Multidisciplinary Career

humin + The Wellbeing Project + Center for healthyminds UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Who cares for the people changing the world?

The Wellbeing Project, Humin, and the Center for Healthy Minds will soon release the State of Changemaker Wellbeing Report. It is one of the most comprehensive studies ever of the inner lives of people driving social change.

10K+	145	40+	12
changemakers	countries	sectors	languages

The survey reaches changemakers in healthcare, education, climate, human rights, the arts, and philanthropy. Six validated psychological measures show how people doing the world's hardest work are really faring. Two companion reviews pull together evidence across sectors and regions.

No study has looked at changemaker wellbeing at this scale before. The report gives researchers, funders, and mission-driven organizations their first global baseline.

What does it take to sustain the people sustaining social change?

Be first to see the findings

SIGN UP AT HUMIN.ORG

THANK YOU FOR READING

Discover how wellbeing science can transform your organization

Humin helps organizations apply cutting-edge science to unlock performance, resilience, and human potential, and to measure the difference it makes.

1M+
people impacted

140
countries reached

70%
felt less stressed

50+
studies using our tools

ABOUT HUMIN'S SERVICES

Humin (formerly Healthy Minds Innovations) is a global nonprofit making wellbeing real by translating science into action, helping organizations, school districts, and communities strengthen performance to advance human flourishing at scale.

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TALK TO OUR TEAM