

# THE SECRET TO EMOTIONAL FLOURISHING: THE DRIVE MODEL FOR SELF-LEADERSHIP AND WELL-BEING

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**Abstract:** *The present paper proposes the DRIVE Model as a novel conceptual framework aimed at addressing a central limitation in the literature on well-being: the lack of an integrated, process-oriented explanation of how individuals actively cultivate and sustain emotional flourishing. While established models such as PERMA (Seligman, 2011) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) identify key components of well-being, they remain largely descriptive and do not sufficiently explain how individuals translate psychological resources into sustained outcomes.*

*The DRIVE Model positions Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a foundational regulatory resource that enables individuals to transform internal motivations into adaptive functioning through five interrelated dimensions: Direction, Relationality, Inner Fulfilment, Vitality, and Engagement. The model is grounded in empirical and theoretical literature on emotional intelligence, organizational commitment, and well-being, and is further informed by findings from caregiving research that highlight the mediating role of organizational commitment in linking emotional competencies to quality-of-life outcomes.*

*The model is presented as a conceptual framework requiring further empirical validation. Directions for future research and practical implications for emotionally demanding professions are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional Intelligence, Well-being, Self-Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Conceptual Model*

## 1. Introduction: The Imperative for an Actionable Flourishing Model

Over the past two decades, the field of positive psychology has significantly advanced the understanding of human well-being by shifting focus from pathology to flourishing (Seligman, 2011). Central theoretical frameworks, including the PERMA model and Self-Determination Theory

(Deci & Ryan, 2000), have provided comprehensive descriptions of the components associated with optimal functioning. These models emphasize the importance of positive emotions, meaningful relationships, intrinsic motivation, and engagement.

However, despite their conceptual strength, these frameworks remain predominantly descriptive. They define what constitutes well-being but offer limited explanation of how individuals actively generate, regulate, and sustain these states over time. This limitation becomes particularly salient in contexts characterized by chronic emotional demands, such as caregiving, healthcare, and social services.

Caregivers in geriatric institutions, for example, are exposed to ongoing emotional strain, including encounters with illness, dependency, cognitive decline, and mortality. In such environments, well-being cannot be understood as a passive outcome but must be actively constructed through psychological regulation and adaptive functioning.

Within this context, Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a key psychological construct. EI has been consistently associated with improved emotional regulation, interpersonal functioning, and resilience (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2012). Furthermore, research indicates that organizational commitment plays a mediating role in linking emotional intelligence to well-being outcomes, suggesting that emotional competencies are translated into sustained functioning through psychological and organizational mechanisms.

These findings highlight the need for an integrative, process-oriented framework that explains how emotional resources are transformed into sustained well-being. The present paper addresses this gap by proposing the DRIVE Model.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: The Foundations of DRIVE**

### **2.1 Emotional Intelligence (EI) as the Engine of Self-Regulation and Self-Leadership**

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is widely defined as the capacity to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Within contemporary psychological literature, EI has evolved beyond a static trait and is increasingly conceptualized as a dynamic regulatory system that supports adaptive functioning in complex emotional environments.

In the context of self-leadership, EI plays a foundational role. Self-leadership requires the capacity for self-awareness, goal alignment, and behavioral regulation (Manz, 1986). EI provides the psychological infrastructure that enables these processes by allowing individuals to monitor internal states, regulate emotional responses, and align behavior with long-term goals.

Accordingly, the present model positions EI as a primary antecedent variable, functioning as the enabling mechanism through which individuals are able to engage in higher-order processes associated with well-being and self-directed functioning.

## **2.2 Flourishing and Motivation: Integrating PERMA and Self-Determination Theory**

The conceptual foundation of the DRIVE Model is grounded in the integration of two major theoretical traditions: the PERMA model of well-being (Seligman, 2011) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

PERMA conceptualizes well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. In parallel, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the central role of intrinsic motivation and the fulfillment of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in promoting psychological growth and well-being.

While both frameworks provide robust theoretical foundations, they remain largely descriptive. They identify the components and conditions associated with well-being but do not fully explain the processes through which individuals translate psychological capacities into sustained outcomes.

The DRIVE Model addresses this gap by proposing that emotional intelligence serves as the operational mechanism through which intrinsic motivation (as conceptualized in SDT) is translated into multidimensional well-being (as conceptualized in PERMA).

## **2.3 The DRIVE Model: A Hybrid Conceptual Framework**

The DRIVE Model is proposed as an integrative, literature-based conceptual framework describing five interrelated dimensions through which emotional intelligence may be translated into emotional flourishing:

- Direction & Drive – representing intrinsic motivation, goal clarity, and purpose-driven behavior

- Relationality – reflecting the quality of interpersonal relationships and emotional attunement
- Inner Fulfilment – capturing meaning, personal growth, and psychological satisfaction
- Vitality – referring to emotional resilience, energy, and sustainability of functioning
- Engagement – representing deep involvement in meaningful activities and flow experiences

Each of these dimensions is conceptually linked to established theoretical constructs (e.g., SDT, PERMA, Flow Theory), and to core domains of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, emotion regulation, and social awareness.

Importantly, the DRIVE Model is presented as a proposed conceptual framework, derived from existing literature. It does not assume that these dimensions have been empirically validated as a unified latent structure, but rather offers a theoretically grounded integration that requires further empirical investigation.

#### **2.4 Emotional Boundary Setting (EBS): A Mechanism of Psychological Regulation**

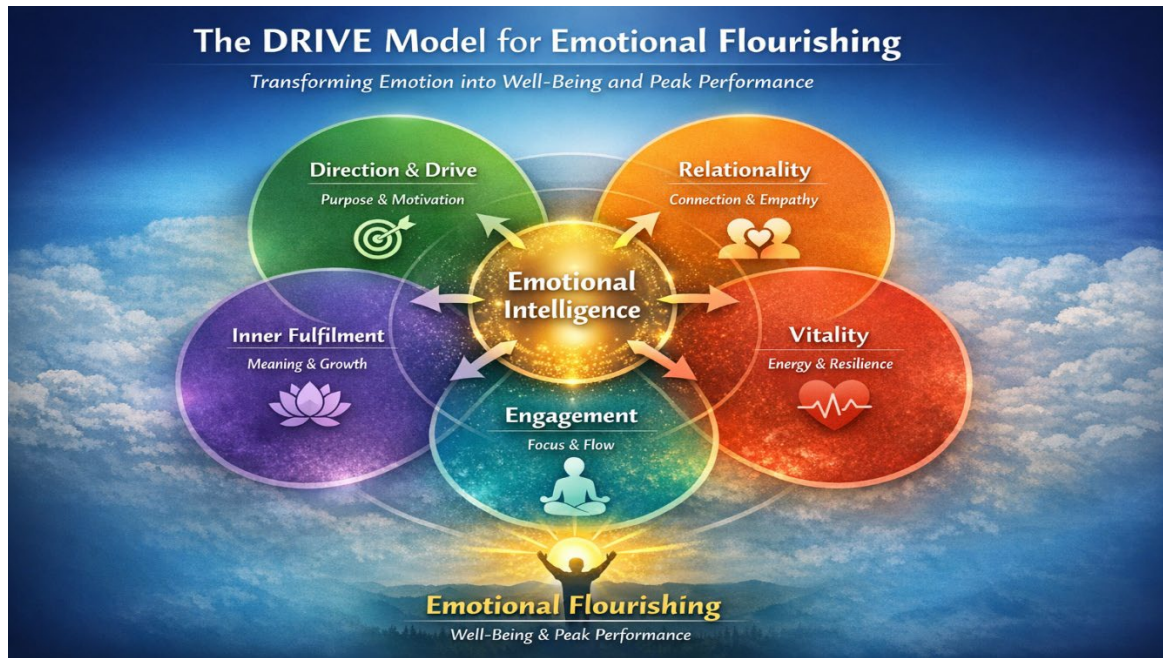
A central extension of the DRIVE Model is the concept of Emotional Boundary Setting (EBS), defined as the capacity to maintain a functional distinction between one's own emotional experiences and the emotional demands of the environment.

EBS can be understood as a behavioral manifestation of emotional intelligence, particularly in its regulatory components. Self-awareness enables individuals to recognize emotional overload, while emotion regulation allows them to maintain adaptive engagement without psychological depletion.

Within the DRIVE framework, EBS plays a critical role in sustaining:

- Vitality, by preventing emotional exhaustion and burnout
- Inner Fulfilment, by preserving autonomy and authentic engagement

This mechanism is especially relevant in emotionally demanding professions such as caregiving, where chronic exposure to distress may otherwise lead to compassion fatigue (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).



### 3. Conceptual Propositions, Hypotheses, and Methodological Context

#### 3.1 Research Propositions and Mediation Structure

The present study advances a set of theoretically derived propositions intended to guide future empirical examination of the DRIVE Model. These propositions are informed by established findings regarding the role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Organizational Commitment in predicting well-being outcomes.

**H1:** Emotional Intelligence (EI) will be positively associated with key psychological processes conceptually aligned with the DRIVE dimensions (e.g., motivation, relational functioning, and engagement).

**H2:** Psychological processes related to the DRIVE dimensions will be positively associated with indicators of well-being, including quality of life.

**H3 (Mediation Proposition):** Organizational commitment will function as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and well-being outcomes.

**H4:** Components conceptually related to motivation and relational functioning (e.g., Direction & Drive and Relationality) are expected to play a central role in predicting well-being.

Importantly, these propositions are **theoretically grounded** and are not presented as direct empirical tests of the DRIVE Model as a unified construct.

### **3.2 Study Context and Empirical Foundation**

The conceptual development of the DRIVE Model is informed by findings from a correlational study (N = 159) conducted among professional caregivers in geriatric institutions. The study examined the relationships between Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Commitment, and Quality of Life.

Within this empirical context:

- Emotional Intelligence was found to be positively associated with both organizational commitment and quality of life
- Organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment, demonstrated a mediating role in the relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being outcomes

These findings provide a **contextual empirical foundation** for the theoretical assumptions underlying the DRIVE Model.

However, it is important to emphasize that:

- The DRIVE dimensions were **not directly measured as independent constructs**
- Organizational commitment is **not treated as a direct equivalent (proxy) of DRIVE components**, but rather as a related mediating construct

### **3.3 Interpretation of Empirical Findings in Relation to the DRIVE Framework**

The empirical findings support several core assumptions of the DRIVE Model, particularly the role of emotional intelligence as a foundational psychological resource and the importance of mediating mechanisms in predicting well-being.

Specifically:

- Emotional Intelligence demonstrated significant associations with both organizational commitment and quality of life
- Organizational commitment was identified as a mediating variable linking emotional competencies to well-being outcomes

These results suggest that the pathway from emotional ability to well-being is not direct, but rather operates through intermediate psychological and organizational processes.

Within the DRIVE framework, these processes may be conceptually interpreted as reflecting elements of motivation, relational functioning, and engagement. However, such interpretation remains **theoretical and inferential**, and requires direct empirical testing.

Additionally, intervention-based findings from related research indicate that emotional intelligence can be developed through structured training, supporting its role as a malleable psychological resource. These findings further reinforce the conceptual positioning of EI as a central mechanism within the DRIVE Model

## **5. Conclusion and Applied Implications**

The DRIVE Model offers a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding emotional flourishing as an active, process-oriented phenomenon. By positioning Emotional Intelligence as a foundational mechanism, the model highlights the importance of translating emotional competencies into sustained psychological functioning through motivation, relational engagement, and adaptive regulation.

Rather than presenting a fixed or empirically validated structure, the model provides a theoretically grounded blueprint for understanding how individuals may actively construct and maintain well-being, particularly in emotionally demanding contexts.

A key contribution of the model lies in the integration of Emotional Boundary Setting (EBS) as a regulatory mechanism. EBS represents a critical self-leadership skill that enables individuals to maintain psychological balance while remaining empathically engaged. Its role is particularly significant in caregiving environments, where chronic emotional exposure may otherwise lead to burnout and compassion fatigue (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

From an applied perspective, the findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing

well-being should move beyond the development of emotional awareness alone and incorporate practical training in emotional regulation and boundary setting.

The DRIVE Model thus reframes well-being not as a passive outcome, but as a dynamic process requiring active psychological investment. It provides a theoretically grounded foundation for future empirical research and practical applications in organizational and clinical settings.

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