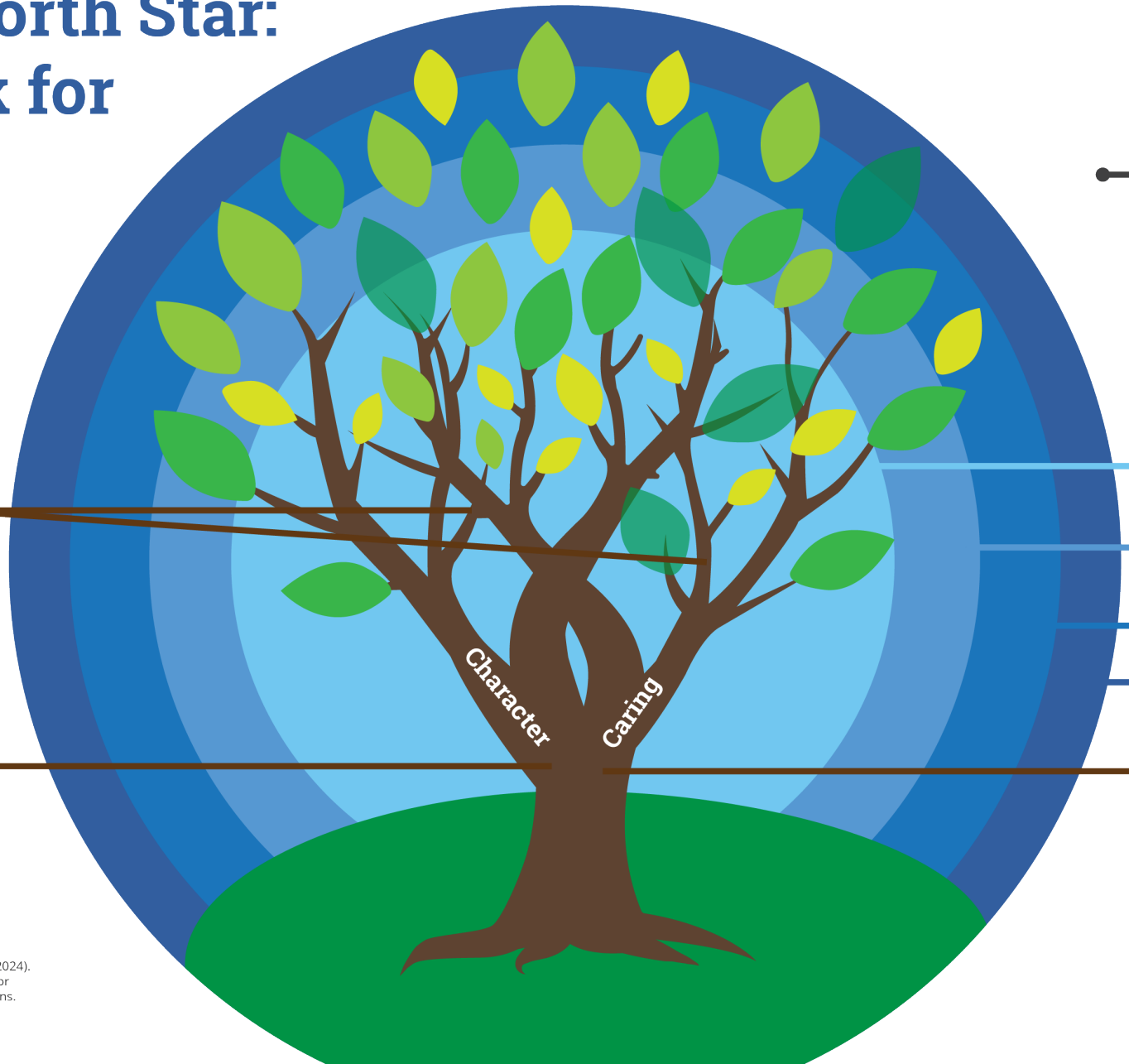
The KNN's North Star: A Framework for Flourishing



Flourishing

Flourishing refers to a wholeness—of being and doing, of realizing one's potential and helping others do the same.[1]

Individuals

Medical and Other Health Professions Education

Health Systems and Other Practice Environments

Society

Practical Wisdom

Using acquired experience to discern the right way to do the right thing in a particular circumstance, with a particular person, at a particular time.[2]

Character

A constellation of characteristics—moral, civic, intellectual and performance—formed over time and manifest in dispositions and practices.[3]

Caring

A blend of practices, dispositions and motivations—attentiveness, responsibility, competency, responsiveness and engagement/citizenship—all aimed at ensuring that individuals and populations grow, develop and flourish as best they can.[4]

Maurana, C.A., Fritz, J.D., Witten, A.A., Williams, S.E., & Ellefson, K.A. (2024). Advancing flourishing as the north star of medical education: A call for personal and professional development as key to becoming physicians. *Medical Teacher*, *46*(12), 1539–1543.

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Appendix

Symbolic Significance of Framework Imagery

- **Blue concentric rings:**
  show the levels of the ecosystem across which the elements of character, caring and practical wisdom operate to promote flourishing from the individual to society as a whole

- **Tree as a whole:**
  represents flourishing through character, caring and practical wisdom

- **Tree trunk:**
  depicts interrelationship of character and caring as a structure that supports and leads to flourishing

- **Branches**:
  two main branches represent the different but related roles of character and caring; practical wisdom is represented by the off-shooting limbs from the main branches

- **Leaves:**
  different leaf colors reflect that flourishing can ebb and flow

Definitions Informing the Framework

1) **Flourishing**: "Human flourishing refers to a wholeness — of being and doing, of realizing one's potential and helping others do the same, of acting with honor and treating others with dignity, of living with integrity even in challenging circumstances. It is not the same as happiness, and it is not just a state of mind. The well-lived life is a life of human flourishing." (Su)

   "A state in which all aspects of a person's life are good; involves numerous domains of life, including happiness and life satisfaction, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships." (VanderWeele)

2) **Practical Wisdom**: "Using acquired experience to discern the right way to do the right thing in a particular circumstance, with a particular person, at a particular time." [One who:]
   - "knows the proper aims of the activity she is engaged in, wants to do the right thing to achieve these aims, and wants to meet the needs of the people she is serving;
   - knows how to improvise, balancing conflicting aims and interpreting rules and principles in light of the particularities of each context;
   - is perceptive, reads social contexts, and [...] sees the gray in a situation;
   - knows how to take on the perspective of another, [...] feels empathy and make decisions that serve others;
   - knows how to make emotion an ally of reason, rely on emotion to signal what a situation calls for, and inform judgment without distorting it; and,
   - is an experienced person." (Schwartz and Sharpe)

3) **Character**: "The complex [constellation] of psychological characteristics that [motivates and] enables individuals to act as moral agents." (Berkowitz and Bier)

   These characteristics are developmentally dependent and contextually formed over time. Character manifests in dispositions and practices, which are influenced by situations and valued according to the sociocultural context.

4) **Caring**: "A blend of practices, dispositions and motivations all aimed at ensuring that individuals and populations grow, develop and flourish as best they can. Caring is:
   - situated in the context of relationships and built on acceptance of interdependence;
   - acknowledges inherent power imbalances but eschews dominance and seeks humility;
   - reliant on trust as a precondition and is also generated in a reinforcing loop, and is mutually beneficial and rewarding." (Tronto, Held, and Mayeroff)

Note: all definitions were adapted from their referenced sources on the following slide

References for Framework Components

Flourishing

1) Su, F.E. (2020). *Mathematics for human flourishing.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Practical Wisdom

2) Schwartz, B., & Sharpe, K. (2010). *Practical wisdom: The right way to do the right thing*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

Character

3) Berkowitz, M.W. & Bier, M.C. (2004). Research-Based Character Education. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. 591*(1), pp. 72-85.

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2022). *The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools.* Third Edition. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues.

Caring

4) Tronto, J.C. (2013). *Caring democracy: Markets, equality, and justice*. New York, NY: NYU Press.

Tronto, J.C. (1993). *Moral boundaries: a political argument for an ethic of care.* New York, NY: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

Held, V. (2006). *The ethics of care: personal, political, and global.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Mayeroff, M. (1971). *On caring.* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

In addition, Framework definitions were adapted from and informed by the work of several other authors including Larry Nucci, PhD, Philippa Foot, PhD, and Tyler VanderWeele, PhD.