

“Wellness” – *What Is It?*

“Wellness” has become the new buzzword for what we all should be reaching for – the ultimate goal that will enable us to live a wonderful life! Wellness is not new – it is simply more encompassing than “health” or “fitness”, and you have more control over your life and well-being than anyone else!! Wellness invites you to explore options, discover possibilities, and find new ways to enhance your life. Wellness can be defined as purposeful, enjoyable living; a deliberate lifestyle choice characterized by personal responsibility and optimal enhancement of the 7 dimensions of wellness. The dimensions of wellness include spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, social, environmental, and financial.



Most people are aware that there are certain behaviors that contribute to our wellness:

- Be physically active
- Choose a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Avoid tobacco and drug use and limit alcohol consumption
- Protect yourself from disease and injury
- Ability to express emotions, to function independently
- To cope with the challenges of daily stressors
- Interact effectively with other people in various social environments
- Use your mind to gather, process, and act on information daily

Likewise, there are behaviors which impede our progress toward wellness:

- More time watching TV = increased risk of obesity and diabetes
- Cigarette smoking = increased risk of lung cancer
- Low intake of fruits and vegetables = increased risk of heart disease
- Social isolation

- Ignoring general health care (regular visits to doctor, dentist, etc.,)

Take some time to examine where you are in each dimension. Personal responsibility has to be on the top of the list. Being aware of what it means for me to truly take care of myself is the first step. If I am lethargic, joyless, bored, full of angst and anger – I am not doing what I need to do to live and be in a wellness lifestyle. Here are some startling facts from the CDC (Centers for disease Control and Prevention) concerning Americans and health behaviors:

- *Americans have not become more active in the last 30 years.
- *The percentage of obese adults has more than doubled in the last 40 years.
- *3% of adults report serious psychological distress; those living in poverty have 4x the rate of mental problems as others.
- *About 17% of people under the age of 65 did not have health insurance coverage at some point in time, including 10% of children under age 18.
- *Race matters: although mortality rates for African Americans have dropped, they remain significantly higher than those of whites for stroke, heart disease, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS.

A final thought – what truly makes my life rich and joyous is the quality of my relationships! Whether they are work related, friendships, family, and/or life mate, these relationships are what make my life fulfilling! The following are key concepts, from a wellness model, for developing successful relationships:

- Forming relationships
 - Self-concept and self-esteem are key
 - Friendship
 - Companionship
 - Respect
 - Acceptance
 - Help
 - Trust
 - Loyalty
 - Reciprocity
- Communication skills
 - Self-disclosure
 - Listening
 - Feedback
- Conflict resolution
 1. Clarify the issue
 2. Find out what each person wants
 3. Identify alternatives
 4. Decide how to negotiate
 5. Solidify agreements
 6. Review and renegotiate

I have only offered you the tip of the iceberg on all the wellness information available. There is a myriad of tools available to guide you. I hope I have given you some things to consider that will help you to move closer and closer to a life of health and wellness!