

Changing Personal Behaviors for Optimal Wellness

Overview

This chapter begins with a discussion of wellness as a personalized definition of individual health. A central tenet of wellness is physical fitness, but the concept also embraces high-quality medical care, nutritious food, good exercise facilities, and social support networks.

Wellness applies primarily to physicality, but also implies dimensions of the intellect, emotional responses, spirituality, and connectedness to one's environment and social community, as well as financial security and occupational satisfaction. Keeping all these variables in balance produces overall wellness, which has been demonstrated to produce longer, healthier lives in individuals and better conditions for society as a whole.

The pursuit of wellness is largely a function of behavior change, a multi-step process that involves (1) understanding the steps required for change, (2) an increase in self-awareness, (3) contemplation of the approaching change, (4) correct preparation for change, and (5) taking the proper action to expedite an efficient and lasting outcome.

Learning Outcomes

1. Define wellness and identify where you are on the wellness continuum.
2. Describe the dimensions of wellness and how they are interconnected.
3. Explain the benefits of wellness for individuals and for society as a whole.
4. Determine your stage in the behavior change process for one or more behaviors.
5. Demonstrate skill at using the SMART goal-setting guidelines by creating a goal for changing one wellness behavior.
6. Develop a behavior change contract with strategies you will use to plan, implement, and maintain your behavior changes, including the resources and supports that will ensure your success.

Lecture Outline

Case Study: Serena

Like Carlos, many college students are faced with enormous change and stress associated with academic performance and physical development. Wellness, as a personalized aspect of "health," describes a vibrant state in which a person enjoys life to the fullest, adapts readily to challenges, and participates effectively in surrounding society. As an entering freshman, Serena seeks to better manage her life with its normal illnesses, depressions, and frustrations.

Key Terms: wellness, physical fitness

Figure: Figure 1.1

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I. What is Wellness and How Well Am I?

Wellness is an active process in which people take steps to become more aware of, and make choices toward, a healthy and fulfilling life. Historically, the term health meant merely the absence of disease, but experts today view it as an inclusive term that encompasses everything from environmental health to the health of individuals, populations, and communities.

Wellness often conveys a more personalized perspective on health defined as the achievement of the highest level of health possible in physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and environmental dimensions.

Central to wellness is physical fitness, or simply fitness, the ability to perform moderate to vigorous levels of physical activity without undue fatigue.

A. Where Am I on the Wellness Continuum?

Understanding your current place on the wellness continuum, a spectrum of wellness states from irreversible damage to optimum wellness, is important for setting goals and changing wellness behaviors.

Key Term: wellness continuum

Figure: Figure 1.2

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Lab: 1.1 Assess Yourself: How Well Are You?;

II. What Are the Dimensions of Wellness?

A. Physical Wellness

Physical wellness is composed of all aspects of a sound body, including physical fitness, a state in which muscular strength, lung capacity, flexibility, body composition, and other physical attributes allows us to work and exercise without undue strain or injury. Diet, level of physical activity, sleep patterns, use of alcohol and tobacco, and many other factors help determine physical wellness.

B. Social Wellness

Social wellness is the ability to have satisfying interpersonal relationships and maintain social connectedness. Contributing to social wellness are an ability to communicate effectively, a capacity to establish intimacy through trust and acceptance, a willingness to ask for and give support, and many other factors.

C. Intellectual Wellness

Intellectual wellness is the ability to think effectively in order to solve problems and meet life's challenges. It requires an ability to use sound reasoning and make careful decisions, to learn from successes and mistakes, to organize tasks, and to maintain a sense of humor.

D. Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is the ability to control your emotions and express them appropriately at the right times. Contributing to emotional wellness are self-esteem, self-confidence, an ability to cope with loss and other challenges, and an ability to balance emotional dependence and independence.

E. Spiritual Wellness

Spiritual wellness may involve a belief in a supreme being, adherence to a way of life prescribed by a particular religion, or a feeling of unity or oneness with others and with nature. It also includes having a sense of meaning or value in life.

F. Environmental Wellness

Environmental wellness entails understanding how the environment can positively or negatively affect you, and how your actions affect the environment. *Emotional intelligence*, which is the ability to identify and manage your own emotions and those of others in productive ways, is an aspect of emotional wellness that has gained increasing attention.

G. Related Dimensions of Wellness

1. Occupational Wellness
2. Financial Wellness

H. Balancing Your Wellness Dimensions

Key Terms: physical wellness, social wellness, intellectual wellness, emotional wellness, emotional intelligence, spiritual wellness, environmental wellness, occupational wellness, financial wellness

Figure: Figure 1.3

PPT Slides: 6–11

Lab: 1.2 Learn a Skill: Chart Your Personal Wellness Balance

III. Why Does Wellness Matter?

A. Good Wellness Habits Can Help You Live a Longer, Healthier Life

Maintaining good wellness habits can help extend your overall life expectancy, as well as your years of healthy life. That's because sound wellness choices—such as wearing a seat belt; avoiding smoking, drugs, and alcohol abuse; eating a healthy diet; and engaging in regular physical activity—reduce your risk of traumatic injury and chronic disease. Specifically, living a sedentary lifestyle, in which a person exerts physical effort only for required daily tasks and not for leisure-time exercise, increases the risk of obesity, high blood pressure, and other diseases

B. Young Adults Have Preventable Risks

For all age groups, significant proportions of the five leading causes of death are related to risk factors that are modifiable—meaning that you can often control them by making better wellness choices. These risks include high blood pressure, tobacco use, alcohol use, high cholesterol, obesity, low fruit and vegetable intake, and physical inactivity.

Living a sedentary life also increases the danger of hypokinetic diseases, conditions that can be triggered or worsened by too little movement or activity. The U.S. is one of the most sedentary and overweight nations on earth.

C. Good Wellness Habits Benefit Society as a Whole


A population with high levels of wellness is happier, is more productive, and spends less money on health care. America's national health priorities are summarized in *Healthy People 2020*, which has four broad goals: (1) attain high-quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death; (2) achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups; (3) create social and physical environments that promote good health for all; and (4) promote quality of life, healthy development, and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

Key Terms: sedentary, hypokinetic diseases, *Healthy People 2020*

Figures: Figure 1.4, Figure 1.5

Table: Table 1.1

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 **Lecture Launcher Videos:** 101-Year-Old’s Secret to Longevity; New Study Shows Exercise May Build Brain Power

IV. How Can I Change My Behavior to Improve My Wellness?

The following five basic steps inspired by the transtheoretical model of behavior change can help you change your behavior.

A. States of Behavior Change: It Doesn’t Happen Overnight

To prepare for behavior change, we must go through a series of mental and emotional stages over a period of months.

B. Step One: Understand the Stages of Behavior Change

Behavior change is an organized, deliberate effort to alter or replace an existing habit or pattern of activity. It is not an event, but a process: Research shows that we must go through a series of mental and emotional stages over a period of months to adequately prepare ourselves for behavior change. The transtheoretical model of behavior change, developed by psychologists James Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, delineates the following six stages of behavior change:

1. In the precontemplation stage, people have no intention of changing.
2. In the contemplation stage, people recognize they have a problem and need to address it, but they may languish in this stage for months or even years.
3. The preparation stage is characterized by careful thought about how to go about changing the behavior. For instance, in this stage it is common for people to formulate a plan for change. Most people in this stage are within about a month of taking action.
4. In the action stage, people begin to execute their plan. Publicly stating the desire to change, enlisting other people’s help, and setting realistic goals are steps that promote success in this stage.
5. The maintenance stage is characterized by vigilance, attention to detail, and long-term commitment as people seek to prevent a relapse into old habits. Participating in a support group or similar resource can promote success in this stage. If you have continued the new action for six months or longer, you’re in the maintenance stage.
 - a. While not an original stage of behavior change, relapse is something that happens periodically for most people trying to change behaviors. Common causes of relapse include overconfidence, daily temptations, stress or emotional distractions, and putting yourself down.
6. At the termination stage, the new behavior is ingrained. This is the last step in the process of behavior change.

C. Step Two: Increase Your Awareness

1. Staying physically fit through daily activity is probably the single most important wellness behavior you can adopt.
2. Eating healthy foods is a cornerstone of overall health. Establishing good nutrition habits has benefits that include increased energy, greater stamina, better weight management, stronger resistance to disease, and reduced risk of chronic illness.
3. Managing your weight removes stress from your body and improves a host of physical functions. Steps you can take toward maintaining a healthy weight include modifying your activity level, exercise habits, eating habits, and stress levels.
4. Managing your stress promotes wellness and protects the body against disease and illness. High levels of unrelieved stress can contribute to poor health.

5. Taking time for others and working to build social support and social capital are important to overall wellness. Social support includes four support areas: emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal. Social capital includes elements of society/community such as support networks, social trust, and feeling of belonging to a group where there is a history or common bond upon which you can rely.
6. A clear path to personal wellness is to avoid smoking, drugs, and alcohol abuse.
7. Be aware of potential accidents, injuries, and the risk of diseases. Adopting behaviors that reduce the risk of motor vehicle accidents and traumatic injuries and that promote fitness and wellness is the core of prevention.

D. Step Three: Contemplate Change

1. Examine your habits and patterns. These include, for example, your level of physical activity, your diet, your consumption of alcohol, and so forth. Ask your-self how long the behavior has been going on, how often it occurs, how serious its consequences are, why you do it, what situations trigger it, and what other people are involved.
2. Assess your beliefs and attitudes. Before you can successfully change a behavior, you must believe that your current behavior pattern could lead to a serious problem. You must also believe that you personally are quite susceptible to developing the problem.
3. Assess your motivation. Your motivation is your inducement to change a behavior. Both external motivations—those that come from someone or something else—and internal motivations—those that come from inside yourself—can induce you to change if they become part of your sense of self. The degree to which you believe in your own abilities is your self-efficacy. Your conviction that you can control events and factors in your life is your locus of control.
4. Choose a target behavior. In finding a well-defined habit, or target behavior, as your initial focus for change, ask these questions:
 - a. What do I want?
 - b. Which change is my greatest priority at this time?
 - c. Why is this important to me?
 - d. What are some specific behaviors that relate to the general problem?

E. Step Four: Prepare for Change

1. Observe role models and the behaviors they practice as a guide to what can work in your life.

Key Terms: behavior change, stages of behavior change, social support, social capital, Health Belief Model, motivation, self-efficacy, locus of control, target behavior, barriers to change

PPT Slides: 18–25

 **Lecture Launcher Video:** Life-Changing Resolutions

V. Set “SMART” Goals

1. To set successful goals, try using the SMART system. A SMART goal is specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-oriented.
2. Anticipate and overcome barriers to change and other potential stumbling blocks to help you prepare for behavior change.
 - a. Overambitious goals can derail behavior change.
 - b. Self-defeating beliefs and attitudes can impede successful change.
 - c. Failing to accurately assess your current state of wellness could block progress.
 - d. Lack of support and guidance can also act as a barrier to change.

4. Make a commitment through a strongly worded statement, either verbally or through a written behavior change contract.

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VI. Make the Commitment and Be Accountable

The final stage in behavior change is to make a commitment and take action and keep it up. A formal written document called the behavior change contract clarifies the goals and steps needed to change a current habit or habit pattern.

1. Visualize yourself engaging in the new behavior.
2. Control your environment so that you don't encounter people or situations that tend to trigger your unwanted behavior.
3. Change your self-talk—that is, the way you think and talk to yourself. For example, replace thoughts of failure with positive reminders that the desired change is within your control.
4. Learn to “counter”—that is, to substitute a desired behavior for an undesirable one. For instance, chew a piece of sugarless gum instead of smoking a cigarette.
5. Practice “shaping”—that is, making a series of small changes that slowly progress.
6. Reward yourself for successes—for example, by scheduling an enjoyable activity or purchasing a gift for yourself.
7. Use writing as a wellness tool. Journaling, or writing personal experiences, interpretations, and results in a journal or notebook, is an important skill for behavior change.

Key Terms: behavior change contract, countering, journaling, electronic activity monitoring systems (EAMS)

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Lab: 1.3 Plan for Change: Create a Behavior Change Contract

Take Charge of Your Health!: Worksheet 1: Health Behavior Self-Assessment; Worksheet 2: Weekly Behavior Change Evaluation; Worksheet 3: Multidimensional Health Locus of Control

Lab Activities

Lab 1.1

Assess Yourself: How Well Are You?

This lab helps students assess their current level of wellness in each of the six dimensions and identify which wellness areas to target for behavior change.

Lab 1.2

Learn a Skill: Chart Your Personal Wellness Balance

This lab helps students learn how to chart their current personal wellness balance and identify the wellness areas in which they would like to improve.

Lab 1.3

Plan for Change: Create a Behavior Change Contract

This lab introduces students to the process of writing a behavior change contract and planning for new lifestyle behaviors, and it serves as a model for other behavior change plans in subsequent chapters.

For additional labs and Take Charge of Your Health! Worksheets visit MasteringHealth (www.masteringhealthandnutrition.com or www.pearsonmastering.com).

101-Year-Old's Secret to Longevity

1. What is this woman's secret to longevity? Explain your answer.
2. Is her diet healthy? Why or why not?
3. The video mentions several reasons for her longevity—can you think of any others that were not mentioned?
4. What role do you think the caretaker plays in her longevity?

New Study Shows Exercise May Build Brain Power

1. Do you get at least 20 minutes of exercise of some kind per day? What sort of exercise do you do?
2. Explain what is meant by “brain power” in the video in your own words.

Life-Changing Resolutions

1. Provide examples of resolutions that can have a positive impact on health and wellness.
2. Discuss the ways in which the top three resolutions discussed can have a positive impact on overall health and wellness.
3. Discuss how spending time with family and friends positively impacts our health.

Additional Chapter Activities

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between wellness and physical fitness?
2. What are some impediments to academic performance resulting from poor states of wellness and/or fitness?
3. Describe some of the ways that different aspects of the dimensions of wellness overlap or intersect.
4. What are some key challenges people might face in attaining a higher state of wellness in a given dimension?
5. How does the wellness continuum operate?
6. What are some problems with a sedentary lifestyle?
7. Describe several preventable disease risk factors.
8. What are the leading causes of death among young Americans? Which of these are preventable?
9. Describe and explain the stages of behavior change. In what ways is each stage important?
10. What might be a central challenge of the termination phase?
11. Have you ever been “stuck” at a stage described in this chapter? What did you do to overcome it; or, if not, why do you think you didn't?
12. How does journaling or recording your experience in detail assist in making positive behavior changes?

13. What are the key aspects of a behavior change contract?
14. How does locus of control come into play in behavior change? What is it and why is it important?

Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does it mean to be well? What are the benefits of wellness?
2. What are the benefits of wellness for you at this stage of your life and for society as a whole? Why should wellness matter?
3. Which habits (wellness-related or not) have you tried to change in the past? Why do you think your efforts succeeded or failed? Using the skills for behavior change described in this chapter, outline your plan for successful change.
4. Using the stages of change (transtheoretical) model, discuss what you might do (in stages) to help a friend stop smoking. Why is it important that a person be ready to change before trying to change?
5. Describe the SMART goal-setting guidelines and how you would use them to set goals for one behavior that you would like to change.
6. Which risk-lowering choices do you incorporate into your lifestyle? Choose two or three of them and discuss the factors that are currently influencing you to have issues with that behavior. How can you reduce effects of influences as you make changes?

In-Class Activity

Ask students to identify a behavior they would like to change, outline the steps they'll take, list the factors that might influence this change, and write out three specific objectives to help them attain it.

Community Action

Have students investigate the state of wellness in their dormitories, schools, or communities using the dimensions of wellness as criteria. Have them then look into resources that might be of use to help those groups overcome shortcomings that may be having a negative effect on health and wellness.

Media Resources

See the following approved websites to learn more about fitness and wellness topics:

American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org

American College of Sports Medicine: www.acsm.org

American Heart Association: www.heart.org

American Lung Association: www.lung.org

American Medical Association: www.ama-assn.org

FDA for Consumers: www.fda.gov/ForConsumers

Healthy People 2020: www.healthypeople.gov

National Center for Health Statistics: www.cdc.gov/nchs

National Health Information Center: www.health.gov/nhic

President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition: www.fitness.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HealthFinder: www.healthfinder.gov

USDA Food and Nutrition Information Center: <http://fnic.nal.usda.gov>

Web addresses are subject to change. Visit MasteringHealth for updates and additional links related to topics in this chapter.