

The Six Dimensions of Wellness Model

At my community presentation I discussed how at Lathrop we work with you to focus on the broad aspects of life to support your health and balance in the years ahead. Developed by Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute (NWI), this interdependent, holistic model, commonly referred to as the Six Dimensions of Wellness, is presented below as excerpted from their website. Applications to life in the senior years will be part of future community and personal conversations. For now I urge you consider in what ways your current path aligns with the model.

PHYSICAL

The physical dimension recognizes the need for regular physical activity. Physical development encourages learning about diet and nutrition while discouraging the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Optimal wellness is met through the combination of good exercise and eating habits. As you travel the wellness path, you'll strive to spend time building physical strength, flexibility and endurance while also taking safety precautions so you may travel your path successfully, including medical self-care and appropriate use of a medical system. The physical dimension of wellness entails personal responsibility and care for minor illnesses and also knowing when professional medical attention is needed. By traveling the wellness path, you'll be able to monitor your own vital signs and understand your body's warning signs. You'll understand and appreciate the relationship between sound nutrition and how your body performs. The physical benefits of looking good and feeling terrific most often lead to the psychological benefits of enhanced self-esteem, self-control, determination and a sense of direction. Physical wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to consume foods and beverages that enhance good health rather than those which impair it.
- It is better to be physically fit than out of shape.

SOCIAL

The social dimension encourages contributing to one's environment and community. It emphasizes the interdependence between others and nature. As you travel a wellness path, you'll become more aware of your importance in society as well as the impact you have on multiple environments. You'll take an active part in improving our world by encouraging healthier living and initiating better communication with those around you. You'll actively seek ways to preserve the beauty and balance of nature along the pathway as you discover the power to make willful choices to enhance personal relationships and important friendships, and build a better living space and community. Social wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to contribute to the common welfare of our community than to think only of ourselves.
- It is better to live in harmony with others and our environment than to live in conflict with them.

INTELLECTUAL

The intellectual dimension recognizes one's creative, stimulating mental activities. A well person expands his or her knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing his or her gifts with others. Using intellectual and cultural activities in the classroom and beyond the classroom combined with the human resources and learning resources available within the university community and the larger community, a well person cherishes intellectual growth and stimulation. Traveling a wellness path, you'll explore issues related to problem solving, creativity, and learning. You'll spend more time pursuing personal interests and reading books, magazines, and newspapers, while keeping abreast of current issues and ideas. As you develop your intellectual curiosity, you'll actively strive to expand and challenge your mind with creative endeavors. Intellectual wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to stretch and challenge our minds with intellectual and creative pursuits than to become self-satisfied and unproductive.
- It is better to identify potential problems and choose appropriate courses of action based on available information than to wait, worry, and contend with major concerns later

SPIRITUAL

The spiritual dimension recognizes our search for meaning and purpose in human existence. It includes the development of a deep appreciation for the depth and expanse of life and natural forces that exist in the universe. Your search will be characterized by a peaceful harmony between internal personal feelings and emotions and the rough and rugged stretches of your path. While traveling the path, you may experience many feelings of doubt, despair, fear, disappointment and dislocation, as well as feelings of pleasure, joy, happiness and discovery. These are all important experiences and components to your search and will be displayed in the value system you will adapt to bring meaning to your existence. You'll know you're becoming spiritually well when your actions become more consistent with your beliefs and values, resulting in a "world view." Spiritual wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to ponder the meaning of life for ourselves and to be tolerant of the beliefs of others than to close our minds and become intolerant.
- It is better to live each day in a way that is consistent with our values and beliefs than to do otherwise and feel untrue to ourselves.

EMOTIONAL

The emotional dimension recognizes awareness and acceptance of one's feelings. Emotional wellness includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about one's self and life. It includes the capacity to manage one's feelings and related behaviors including the realistic assessment of one's limitations, development of autonomy, and ability to cope effectively with stress. The well person maintains satisfying relationships with others. Awareness of, and accepting a wide range of feelings in yourself and others is essential to wellness. On the wellness path, you'll be able to express feelings freely and manage feelings effectively. You'll be able to arrive at personal choices and decisions based upon the synthesis of feelings, thoughts, philosophies, and behavior. You'll live and work independently while realizing the importance of seeking and appreciating the support and assistance of others. You'll

be able to form interdependent relationships with others based upon a foundation of mutual commitment, trust, and respect. You'll take on challenges, take risks, and recognize conflict as being potentially healthy. Managing your life in personally rewarding ways, and taking responsibility for your actions, will help you see life as an exciting, hopeful adventure. Emotional wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to be aware of and accept our feelings than to deny them.
- It is better to be optimistic in our approach to life than pessimistic.

OCCUPATIONAL [in retirement this requires a little more thought]

The occupational dimension recognizes personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work. At the center of occupational wellness is the premise that occupational development is related to one's attitude about one's work. Traveling a path toward your occupational wellness, you'll contribute your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is both personally meaningful and rewarding. You'll convey your values through your involvement in activities that are gratifying for you. The choice of profession, job satisfaction, career ambitions, and personal performance are all important components of your path's terrain. Occupational wellness follows these tenets:

- It is better to choose a career which is consistent with our personal values, interests, and beliefs than to select one that is unrewarding to us.
- It is better to develop functional, transferable skills through structured involvement opportunities than to remain inactive and uninvolved.

