

## Keeping the Wheel Spinning

At a council meeting several weeks ago a discussion arose about community funding for fitness activities. When we consider the allocation of shared resources and the promotion of activities, we have the chance to make clear our priorities for the benefit of all. As the discussion went on, I had the thought that it was time again to lay out what we mean by Wellness promotion at Lathrop, and how this model can help us each make choices for ourselves and the community. If you are a relative newcomer to Lathrop, or take advantage of the annual Wellness review conversations some of what follows will sound familiar.

Here are some basic principles. I can send you a summary of the foundational model as laid out by Dr Bill Hettler of the National Wellness institute, from which I try to extrapolate more specifically to the lives of seniors (Email me at [rolmsted@lathrop.kendal.org](mailto:rolmsted@lathrop.kendal.org)):

- Change is an intrinsic part of life and can play a particularly large role in the experience of aging.
- The goal is to develop resilience in the face of change, in some cases to direct or forestall the change, but generally to help us more positively move through change.
- Just as we manage an investment portfolio, the principle is to balance our attention and effort in terms of time, energy and commitment across the broad range of life's aspects. The spokes in this model are **physical, social, emotional, intellectual, vocational, and spiritual**.
- We acknowledge that all things operate along a spectrum of possibilities, but within each dimension there are choices that better serve us and support our momentum, that is, they "keep the wheel spinning" with greater ease.
- What ultimately fuels that momentum is our intention to keep growing and refining our life experience through conscious commitment and *a willingness to reach in the direction of challenges*, both big and small.
- And of course, we understand that all dimensions interweave, informing and enhancing each other.

It's a good idea to intermittently look at the balance in one's life, and in my process with residents I literally create a six sectioned grid or wheel and map out the activities and practices that reflect engagement in that area. Essential questions in this process of reflection include:

- **Physical** – do I have regular fitness practices? Do I follow any guidelines that help me determine an optimal diet? What sort of supportive habits do I have around getting good sleep?
- **Social** – do I have a supportive network of friends and family? How do I leverage those relationships to deepen my security or quality of life?
- **Emotional** – what are the elements in my tool kit that help me manage loss and stress? Do my social networks or vocational practices help or inhibit?
- **Intellectual** – do I continue to seek out new learning? Can I stimulate not only the mechanics of the brain but also the magic of mind by stretching into areas where I haven't already "studied?"
- **Vocational** – am I involved with activities that give me a sense of my value to the world, whether channeling creative energy or contributing to the common good? In what way am I supporting the care of another or of the world outside myself?
- **Spiritual** – do I create moments in my day or week to connect with mystery or awe? When and how do I most often feel gratitude or acceptance of my place in creation?

So, from the Wellness perspective, balanced health, like a balanced diet includes a broad number of elements. Residents know well how impactful our state of physical wellness is on all the rest of the elements, but of course it works in both directions. Social isolation or lack of purpose leads to poor outcomes in our ability to fight disease and maintain our level of function overall. And knowing that life gets quickly full, just as we can only consume so many calories in a day, it is important to look for “wellness dense” activities, bringing physical movement or a social component to deepen and enrich the time we spend. In that sense, a group game night, ensemble music or dance, Learning in Retirement, peer support groups and the like earn “extra points.” And of course let’s look for any activity that puts us in connection with our muse!