

Wellness, The New Health Goal

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Many people think of health as just the absence of physical disease. But wellness goes beyond this idea of health. For example, persons with serious illnesses or disabilities can learn to live a very healthy life. Some parts of health are determined by your genes, your age, and other factors that are beyond your control. Wellness though, is largely determined by the decisions you make in your life, about how you live your life. Studies say that 70% of all disease is caused by your lifestyle.

Wellness is not a new concept, but it is fairly new in popularity. Wellness includes six different dimensions of health that depend on and affect each other:

Physical – taking care of your body.

Emotional – taking care of your psychological health.

Intellectual – taking care of your growth & development (using your mind).

Social – taking care of your relationships with others.

Spiritual – taking care of your spirit or soul.

Environmental – managing the environment in a healthy manner.

It doesn't matter what your age or health status is, you can take advantage of this process of change and growth to improve your quality of life.

The most desirable, physical health, has

several necessary elements to ensure its development: eating well, exercising, avoiding bad or harmful habits, practicing safe sex, getting regular medical and dental checkups, and learning about personal safety.

The decisions that you make today regarding these different areas of your life will influence how many years you will live and how healthy those years will be.

Emotional health is an active state that changes with your physical, intellectual, spiritual, interpersonal and social, and environmental health. Exploring and developing a sense of who you are, what your thoughts and feelings are, is essential to emotional wellness. Developing a sense of optimism, trust, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-control along with the ability to maintain satisfying relationships with others. In order to maintain emotional wellness, a person needs to be willing to explore your thoughts and feelings, identify obstacles and find solutions to problems.

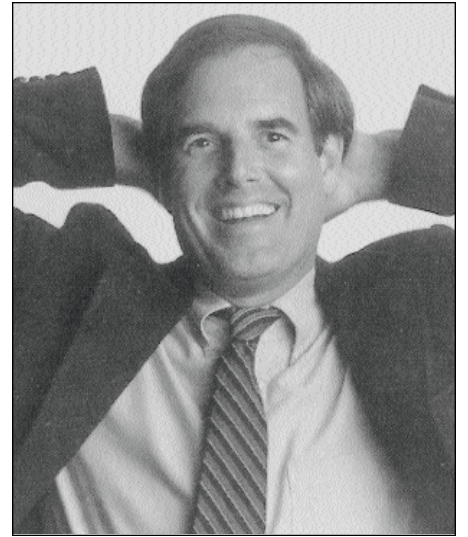
Intellectual wellness includes an openness to new ideas, an ability to question and think critically and the motivation to master new skills. Equally important are a sense of humor, creativity, and curiosity, a mind that is active is essential to overall wellness. People who enjoy intellectual wellness never stop learning. Actively seeking out

new experiences and challenges.

Do you have an appreciation for the meaning of life and the expanse of nature? Are you at peace with your place in the universe? Spiritual wellness involves the capability for love, compassion, forgiveness, joy, altruism and fulfillment. Organized religions help many people develop spiritual health. While others find it through good works, political action, meditation, art and nature meaning and purpose for their lives can be accomplished. Through these approaches guiding beliefs, principles, or values help during difficult times.

Social wellness is having satisfying relationships with your spouse, your family, your friends, and associates, they are essential to both physical and emotional health. We need loving, supportive people in our lives. Social wellness also includes learning good communication skills, intimacy, and a good support network of friends and family.

Lastly, Environmental Wellness includes the physical environment (cars, streets, metal, wood, water, etc.), the biological environment (other people, animals, insects, viruses, germs, chemicals, food, etc.), and the social environment (socio-cultural habits, violence, gangs, etc.) We need to learn to manage our environment and protect ourselves against dangers. Doing

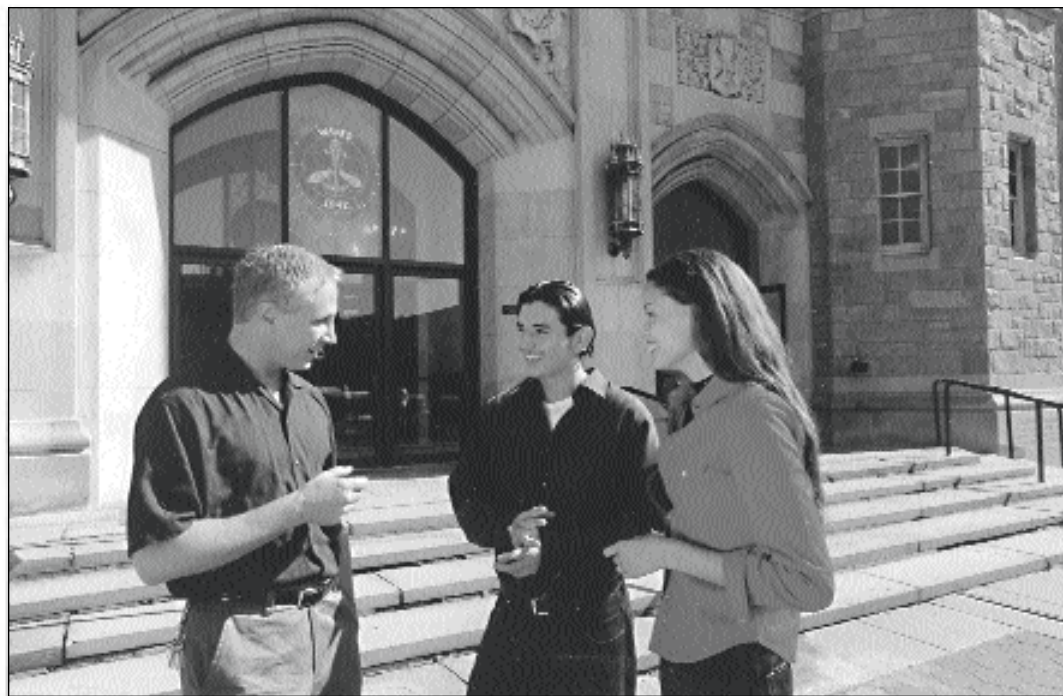


what we can to cut back or wipe them out, either on our own or with others is necessary in becoming environmentally well. Our own personal health depends on the health of the other things on this planet.

The six dimensions of wellness act uninterrupted upon one another. Making a change in one dimension will affect one or more of the others. For example, regular exercise (physical wellness) can boost feelings of well-being and self-esteem (emotional wellness), which can boost feelings of confidence in the work place or social life and school (social wellness). Good health is ever changing and growing by increasing your wellness in one area it often affects many others.

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