

Health and Wellness

DEFINITIONS:

How do we define or describe what it means to have good health and to be well?

The Psychological Counseling and Wellness Center of California State University at Chico says this:

Wellness is an on-going lifestyle, which requires taking responsibility and making healthy choices. It promotes individual well being through a balance in the following areas: Social, Cultural, Physical, Spiritual, Emotional, Intellectual, Life Planning and Environmental.

If we look more closely at these 8 main points, we can get a good idea of what health and wellness mean in our own life. As we talk and read about these points, each one of us should think how each point applies to our own life.

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SOCIAL WELLNESS

Social Wellness includes many things. It is about getting along with people whom we work with; who are our friends and family; whom we play and relax with and whom we do business with in our daily lives.

Here are some main points that we can look for:

- Do we feel comfortable and at ease around people we work with? Who we just hang out with?

- Are we good at telling others about our feelings and needs? So that they understand what we feel inside?
- Do we build close friendships?
- Do we listen carefully when others are speaking? Do we give others time to talk about their feelings and ideas?
- Do we care for others? Do we let them care for us?
- Do we take time each day to care for ourselves? Do we to give ourselves time to relax and play with family and friends?

Social Wellness Facts and Tips:

- People who live or stay alone most of the time tend to get sick more often, and remain ill for longer periods of time. They have a death rate 2-3 times higher than people who spend some time around others.
- When people have friends or family who support them, they do better under stress.
- About 20% of Americans feel lonely and isolated during their free time.
- Hugs can improve health.
- Laughter is good medicine.
- Cholesterol levels go up when people are alone a lot.
- Warm, close friendships cause higher levels of immunoglobulin A (an antibody that helps keep away respiratory infections and cavities).
- A good set of friends can create good feelings and can help with self-esteem.

So how can I improve my social wellness?

- Try to be honest with yourself and others.
- Get to know your own needs. Try to do things and to be with people who help to meet those needs.
- Make the effort to talk to the people who are supportive in your life.
- Join a club or a group of people who do things that interest you.



CULTURAL WELLNESS

Cultural Wellness is:

- Being aware of your family's background.
- It is also understanding that there are many people in our world who come from very different backgrounds.

Cultural Wellness means that you can talk and work and play well with people who are:

- Males or females
- Who may be a different color than you
- Who may live in a mud hut or a mansion
- Who may be much older or younger than you
- Who may not be as smart as you!
- Who may speak a different language than you

Steps to Encourage Cultural Wellness:

- Keep an open mind.
- Try not to pre-judge others. Not everyone in each culture is the same.
- Treat people as you would like to be treated.
- Learn more about unfamiliar cultures.
- Know your own background. Ask your grandparents or other family members about your family history.
- Move from one way of thinking (your own) to allow for other cultures' ways of thinking.

- Talk with others about their traditions and cultures.
- Work with people of different cultures when you share the same goals.

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PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Physical Wellness is a measure of the level of health and fitness for each person.

Some everyday goals you can set for your health and fitness are:

- a good attitude
- discipline
- commitment
- motivation
- and good information about what food and exercise is best for you.

**A wise person once said:
*Those who think they have no time for exercise
will sooner or later have to find time for illness.***

Tips for Personal Fitness:

- Exercise three times a week, 20-30 minutes per session.
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator. And walk when you can.
- Get the sleep your body needs.
- Use seat belts and helmets, and encourage others to do so.
- Learn to know when you don't feel well.
- Listen to your body.
- Practice safe sex.
- Eat breakfast; it's the most important meal of the day.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods.

Prevention:

Sometimes you get sick and you just can't help it. Sometimes people are born with a physical condition that there was no way to prevent. But there are some conditions that are a threat to our overall health and well-being that are preventable. The two leading causes of death in this country that are totally preventable are smoking and obesity.

Smoking:

Cigarette smoking is the single most preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Each year, more than 400,000 Americans die from cigarette smoking. In fact, one in every five deaths in the United States is smoking related. Some of the smoking related illnesses are:

- Cancer
- High blood pressure
- Heart Disease
- Stroke
- Emphysema/Bronchitis
- Pneumonia
- Chronic Airway Obstruction

Obesity:

Almost 65% of people in the USA are either overweight (defined as roughly 10-30 pounds over a healthy weight), or obese (30 or more pounds over a healthy weight). Americans' extra weight costs the nation about \$93 billion a year in medical bills. This is even higher than the costs for smoking, which are reported to be \$76 billion a year. The 97 million adults in the United States who are overweight or obese are at increased risk for:

- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke
- Gallbladder disease
- Osteoarthritis
- Sleep apnea
- Respiratory problems
- Endometrial, breast, prostate and colon cancer

What can we do about the problems of disease, death and illness from the effects of smoking and obesity? There are many products on the market to help us quit smoking or to lose those unwanted pounds, but the basics are still true:

- **Eat less and exercise more to lower your weight!**
- **Quit smoking!**

Make small changes, one at a time, to help lower your risk of serious side effects from both smoking and obesity. You will find suggestions for a beginning exercise program at the end of this chapter in the Resources section. The following website address is a good resource for help with quitting smoking:

www.quitsmokingsupport.com

**ALWAYS ASK YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE STARTING ANY
EXERCISE PROGRAM
TO INSURE THAT IT'S SAFE FOR YOU.**

**THE POWER TO CHANGE
IS IN YOUR HANDS!**

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SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

Spiritual Wellness It is the process of looking within to become more in touch with the spiritual parts of your life.

Steps to Encourage Spiritual Wellness



Ask yourself the "big questions":

- Who am I?
- Why did I come here?
- Why do humans/the world exist?
- Why is there evil?
- What happens after death?



Be quiet:

- Spend time alone.
- Meditate regularly. Meditation is the process of focusing on the now. If we live in the present and let go of the past, and not worry about the future, we can achieve the inner peace that we strive for. There are many forms of meditation. Find out which one is right for you by looking for resources at your local library or online.



Be inquisitive and curious:

- Don't shut doors before you check out what's behind them.



Don't fear grief and pain:

- Grief and pain teach us lessons.
- Allow yourself to feel the pain fully, then ask what it is trying to teach you.



Be and do:

- Spirituality is not just reading the bible or going to church; it's about doing what you believe in.



Practice acceptance:

- Take responsibility for your life without blaming anyone, including yourself. See what the situation can teach you and how you can share what you learn with others.



Be playful:

- Spirituality is in music, art, dance, laughter, singing and all of life.



Take "seven breath" breaks:

- Stop at times in your day, close your eyes, and take seven deep, slow, belly breaths (breathe in to the count of seven, breathe out to the count of seven, seven times). Then, open your eyes and see your new world.

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EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Emotional Wellness is:

- maintaining good mental health
- a positive attitude
- high self esteem
- a strong self image
- the ability to “bounce back” after an emotionally tough lesson
- willing to look at yourself honestly
- taking responsibility for your behavior
- responding to challenges as opportunities

Tips to Increase Emotional Wellness:

- Practice optimism.
- Spend time with friends and family. Discuss important personal concerns with each other.
- Participate in self-esteem workshops or support groups.
- Read a self-help book that interests you. Always realize that no one book has all the answers to everything you may need.
- Learn time management skills and other stress management techniques.
- Smile at least 20 times each day.

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INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS

Intellectual Wellness is having curiosity and a strong desire to learn. It is valuing many experiences, staying stimulated with new ideas, and sharing. It is responding to challenges and opportunities to grow, making plans, developing strategies and solving problems.

It is the ability to engage in clear thinking and recall and to think independently, creatively and critically.

Remember: Everyone, no matter what their intellectual level, needs and desires intellectual stimulation. The DCS is often the person that can creatively come up with adaptations and/or ideas for intellectually stimulating activities.

Tips for maintaining a high level of intellectual wellness:

- Take a course or workshop.
- Seek out intellectually inspiring people.
- Subscribe to an interesting journal or newsletter - you'll get a regular dose of intellectual information.
- BUY A BOOK! - or check one out at the library.
- Learn to appreciate art - attend exhibits, plays, musicals and poetry readings.
- Explore different ways to use spare time - intellectually stimulating ways to pass time include puzzles or board games.
- Learn basic nutrition, and exercise regularly to maximize brain functioning. Many nutrients are essential to good memory and concentration.



LIFE PLANNING WELLNESS

Life Planning Wellness includes:

- discovering and maintaining a balance between personal, social, and vocational goals
- taking advantage of opportunities to learn skills that will enhance satisfaction and enjoyment
- the awareness of your own strengths and skills
- and the time and financial commitment necessary to pursue the lifestyle of your choice.

Tips to Increase Life Planning Wellness:

- Create a vision for your future
- Develop a budget and live by it
- Actively pursue your interests and learn how they relate to career and life choices

But what about people that may not have good life skills and don't know how to find the information they need to solve their problems? As a DCS, you may be faced with assisting the individuals that you work with in finding important information and solutions to life's problems.

It's important to have a game plan when faced with decisions. The following is a suggestion for working out solutions to problems:

- Write the situation/problem down on a sheet of paper as clearly as possible.
- List the different possibilities for solutions to the problem as you know them.
- If you know of individuals or agencies that deal with solutions to your problem, list those numbers or find them in the phone book in case you may want to contact them for assistance.
- Make calls to ask others to assist you with finding a workable solution. Often, if the agency or individual you call can't help, they may direct you to others who might.
- Address each problem one step at a time and do the best you can and things won't become as overwhelming.



ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

Environmental Wellness is an awareness of the precarious state of the earth and the effects of your daily habits on the physical environment.

It is maintaining a way of life that maximizes harmony with the earth and minimizes harm to the environment.

It includes being involved in socially responsible activities to protect the environment.

Tips to Improve Environmental Wellness:

■ Snip your six-pack rings

Six-pack holders are virtually invisible underwater, so marine animals can't avoid them. Seagulls sometimes strangle themselves by catching one loop around their neck while another loop gets snagged on a stationary object.

What to do?

- Before you toss six-pack holders into the garbage, snip each circle with a pair of scissors. When you're on the beach, pick up any six-pack rings you find, snip them and put them in a trash can.

■ Don't leave your water running

Washing dishes with the tap running can use an average of 30 gallons of water. A running faucet uses 3-5 gallons of water per minute. As much as 5 gallons of water is wasted if you leave the tap on while brushing your teeth. If you wash your car at home using an ordinary hose, you can use up to 150 gallons of water.

What to do?

- When brushing your teeth, wet and rinse your brush only. A half gallon of water will be used as opposed to 5-9 gallons.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill up a basin of water instead of letting your water run.
- When washing your car, either take it to a self-service car wash, or use a shut-off nozzle on your hose when washing it at home. This can save more than 100 gallons of water.

■ Use recycled paper bags when shopping

Plastic shopping bags are not biodegradable. The bags never disappear in the earth; they just break into small pieces. Plastic bags that wind up in the ocean can kill marine life that swallow or get tangled in them. "Recyclable" paper bag does not mean recycled. If a bag does not say "recycled," it's probably made from virgin paper.

What to do?

- First, consider if you really need a bag before taking one, especially if your purchase is small. Also, bring your own cloth bags when you shop, or reuse old bags that you have already saved.

MEDICATION ISSUES AND THE DIRECT CARE STAFF

As a Direct Care Staff (DCS) member, you may assist the person you work with in taking their medications. You may also be there when the doctor prescribes the medication. It may be your job to pick up prescriptions at the pharmacy and to make sure that the person you work with takes the right medicine at the right time. You may need to watch for side effects, signs of overmedication or drug interactions.

Since DCSs often spend a large part of the individual's day with them, it is important for you to have a basic knowledge of:

- What is the definition of a medication?
- What medication(s) is (are) the individual I work with taking?
- What are the possible medication side effects or complications?
- What is my role as a DCS in assisting with taking medications (according to the policies and procedures of the organization that I work for)?

Medications are substances taken into the body (or applied to the body) for the purpose of prevention, treatment, relief of symptoms or cure.

Medications include the following:

- *Prescription medications*, which must be ordered by a physician (or other persons with the authority to write prescriptions).
- *Over-the-counter medications*, which can be purchased without a prescription.
- *Vitamins, naturopathic remedies and homeopathic remedies*, which are all considered to be medications.

Many medications do a lot of good. However, medications or drugs can also cause harm if used improperly or in the wrong dosages. Knowing about medications, their use and how to assist individuals in using them is vital to the health and well-being of those you serve.

OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICINES

Common over-the-counter medications include pain relievers (such as Tylenol and aspirin), anti-inflammatory drugs (such as ibuprofen and Advil), cough syrups, antacids (such as Tums and Pepto-Bismol), allergy relief medicines and laxatives. You can buy these drugs without a doctor's prescription.

Although these medicines are considered safe, they can interact (cause reactions) with other medications. It's also possible that an excess of an over-the-counter medication can be toxic. It is very important to tell the doctor or pharmacist about all the medicines the person takes, both prescription and non-prescription, the amount taken, and to ask if there are any possible drug interactions between them.

When You Buy Non-Prescription Medicines:

- Read the list of ingredients carefully. The medicine may contain alcohol, aspirin, caffeine, salt (sodium) or sugar.
- Ask the pharmacist to explain anything you don't understand.
- Typical aspirin tablets contain 325 milligrams (mg) of aspirin. Some over-the-counter, extra-strength pain medicines contain a combination of aspirin and acetaminophen (the ingredient in Tylenol).
- Look at the list of warnings or precautions.
- Never take ibuprofen and aspirin together; they counteract with each other.

Again, over-the-counter medications can interact with other prescription and nonprescription drugs. Some over-the-counter medications should not be taken by people with certain medical conditions. **Read labels carefully!**

DRUG INTERACTIONS AND OVERMEDICATION

Some people take several medications, and they may see more than one doctor. It's possible for one doctor to prescribe a medicine and not know the patient is already taking a drug that does the same thing. The person may over-medicate him/herself. If the doctor doesn't know all the medicines the person takes, the doctor may prescribe a new drug that causes a bad reaction with another drug. Drug interactions can make someone sick, and the symptoms can be mistaken for a new illness.

Review prescription dosages at least once a year. Over time, a person's need for a medication can change. A chronic illness can improve or get worse. People who are small in size or who lose weight may also need smaller doses. Any dramatic change in a person's physical or mental status should be brought to his/her physician's attention.

(See *Food and Drug Interaction* information in the Resource component of this section.)

Important Questions to Ask the Prescribing Physician:

- What is the medicine for?
- Will the medicine interact with other drugs he/she may be taking?
- Is there a generic (not a brand name) form available?
- How often should he/she take it?
- How much should he/she take?
- How long should he/she take it?
- Should he/she take it with food or on an empty stomach?
- Are there other special instructions? Should he/she avoid alcohol, sunlight or certain foods?
- Are there any side effects and should we report them?
- Can we prevent side effects?
- What should we do if he/she misses a dose?
- Do blood levels need to be checked for this medication? If so, how often?

The pharmacist can answer many of these questions for you. Use the same pharmacy whenever possible, and get to know your pharmacist. Many pharmacies keep a record of all prescriptions. That way, they can be on the alert for possible medication problems.

Keep a Record:

It is essential that you keep a record of all the medications the person that you work with takes, including over-the-counter medicines. Keep the list current and take it with you to all doctor appointments. (You may also want to post the list in a visible location, so that anyone else who provides assistance is also aware of these medications). Take the list when you go to the pharmacy for any new prescriptions. That way, both your doctor and your pharmacist will know exactly what the person takes.

General Rules:

- Never increase or decrease the medication dosage without checking with the doctor.
- Only assist someone with taking a medication if it was prescribed for him/her.
- Keep all drugs in their original containers.
- Unless the doctor tells you otherwise, a person should take the entire prescription, even if symptoms are gone. Many antibiotics need to be taken for a full 5-7 days or longer, even though the symptoms are gone within the first couple of days.
- Medications should be taken with a full glass of water, unless instructions say to do otherwise.
- Don't crush pills or capsules unless you check with the pharmacist. Many medications have a coating to protect the throat or stomach lining. A crushed pill could release all the medicine at once instead of the way it's intended. For this same reason, don't allow someone to chew pills or capsules unless you've checked with the pharmacist.
- Don't cut pills in half unless they have a line across the middle to show they can be broken and you have checked first with the pharmacist. Ask the pharmacist if the pills come in smaller doses, or ask the pharmacist to break them for you.

- Dispose of all medications that are past the expiration date per organizational policies and procedures.

Managing medications is no easy task. Careful management will save money, prevent medication problems, and will make sure that essential medications can do the job they're supposed to do.

Other important information that an individual's physician needs to know to prescribe the best treatment and/or medication:

- Medical history
- Any drug allergies
- Current medications the person is taking
- Why they're taking them
- Any observation of recent physical or behavioral changes

These observations of an individual are frequently best made by the family or DCS, both of whom may spend the largest amount of time with that person. The RN or medical professional that serves as the consultant for your organization should also be made aware of any medication concerns pertaining to the individual you work with.

NOTE: Although it is not the responsibility of the DCS to monitor these facts about the individual's medication, he/she may play an important role in recognizing a potential problem and then reporting it to his/her supervisor.

Consider the Following:

- The Food and Drug Administration estimates that hospitalization resulting from inappropriate prescription drug use costs the nation \$20 billion annually.
- Seventeen percent of hospitalizations of elderly Americans are the result of adverse medication side effects.
- Of the 2.3 billion prescriptions that are filled annually, approximately one half are not taken properly.
- Americans' failure to take their medications as instructed costs more than \$100 billion a year in increased hospital and nursing home admissions, lost worker productivity and premature death.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the agency you work for to provide you with information concerning its medication policies.

Please note the following statement from Arkansas' Developmental Disabilities Services Standards:

DDS Standards for Community Programs

Effective: 9/7/93

Implementation: 11/15/93

Each organization shall note that if you are administering medication you are liable, as is the board, and any staff giving drugs. See Nurse Practice Act of Arkansas.

Whether you are working as an employee of an agency, or as a self-employed DCS, you must consider the laws and regulations that dictate the policies regarding medication administration. Although the Arkansas DDS Standards state that each organization is liable when staff is administering medications, some DCSs may not fully realize their own liabilities.

For this reason, it is wise for each DCS to be fully informed as to the provisions regulating such actions in the state where they work.

NOTE: Although a complete copy of Arkansas' Nurse Practice Act is not included in the Resources component following this section, the Act can be accessed at the following web site address: www.state.ar.us/nurse.

The specific reference to assistance with medication is contained in an amendment to that act, called *Position Statement 97-2*, which was passed in 1997.

Position Statement

97-2

Assistance with Self Medication for Unlicensed Persons

(See Resources component)

TRANSFERS/LIFTS

POINTERS:

- Different people use different transfer methods
- Use the transfer method preferred by the person being transferred
- Give only the assistance necessary to aid
- Note and protect catheter tubes, braces and other devices the person must transfer with them
- Transfer across the shortest distance
- Lock all wheels to prevent slipping
- Tell the person you are transferring him/her, what you are going to do and when and how you are going to do it
- Work together; count to three and then lift. Allow the person to help as much as possible
- Avoid jerky, quick motions
- Never squeeze or pinch the person during a move. (This is easier said than done!)

TRANSFER METHODS:

- The person is the expert in transferring from a wheelchair!
- Always ask how you can help, if assistance is needed and what transfer method is preferred
- Thirty percent of DCSs suffer a care-related injury caused by inappropriate lifts and/or transfers

A description of methods of transfers is included in the Resources component following this segment.

SECONDARY CONDITIONS

People with disabilities often develop additional medical problems that are causally related to their disability and that may be more debilitating than their primary disability. The term "causally related" is used here because the medical problem would not occur without the existence of the disability. These medical concerns are called "secondary conditions."

The most commonly reported secondary conditions are pressure sores, contractures, urinary tract infections and depression. While these secondary conditions will not be covered individually in this training, it may be helpful for DCSs to refer to the Resources included at the end of this section for further information.

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