

WHOLE HEALTH MONTH

Eight Dimensions of Wellness TIP SHEET



Interested in improving your wellness? This tip sheet provides a list of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness, as well as sample activities that can be done to improve wellness in each area. In addition, there is some explanation as to why these activities actually matter and proof of their ability to create subtle transformations in your life.

Emotional Wellness

Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.

Improve Your Emotional Wellness

Stop and take a moment to look up at the stars or take in the beauty of a flower. Be awe-inspired.

Rationale

This might sound basic, but a study found that awe, measured in two different ways, was the strongest predictor of lower levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines. What are pro-inflammatory cytokines? These cytokines are proteins that contribute to the operation of neurotransmitters in the brain; and increased production of these proteins is associated with stress and depression.¹

Environmental Wellness

Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

Improve Your Environmental Wellness

Set aside time to enjoy nature. If you can, try planting a garden or taking a walk in the woods. Live in an urban environment? Stroll through a nearby park.

¹ Stellar, J. E., John-Henderson, N., Anderson, C. L., Gordon, A. M., McNeil, G. D., & Keltner, D. (2015). Positive affect and markers of inflammation: Discrete positive emotions predict lower levels of inflammatory cytokines. *Emotion* (15283542), 15(2), 129-133 5p. doi:10.1037/emo0000033

Rationale

“University of Michigan researchers demonstrated that, after just an hour interacting with nature, memory performance and attention spans improved by 20 percent...Researchers at the University of Kansas reported a 50 percent boost in creativity for people who were steeped in nature for a few days.”²

Financial Wellness

Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.

Improve Your Financial Wellness

Check your credit report once each year. The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires each of the nationwide credit reporting companies—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—to provide you with a free copy of your credit report, at your request, once every 12 months.³ If your credit report or credit score are not what you anticipated, seek free assistance to reconcile this issue.

Rationale

Concern over one’s financial state is a significant source of stress and anxiety for people. Seventy-two percent of Americans reported feeling stressed about money at least some of the time, according to the American Psychological Association. This stress affects other areas of wellness as people then delay their health care needs. Money is also a major cause of arguments in nearly one-third of adult relationships. Controlling financial stress will improve other dimensions of wellness, too.⁴

Intellectual Wellness

Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

Improve Your Intellectual Wellness

Practice something every week to improve your skills and use your gifts, like crafts, cooking, music, or sports.

Rationale

Something like cooking is great, linking intellectual wellness with physical wellness. People who frequently cook meals at home eat healthier and consume fewer calories than those who cook less, according to Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health research.⁵ Not only are you stimulating your brain with all of those measuring cups and calculations of serving sizes, you’re doing something good for your body.

Occupational Wellness

Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one’s work.

2 <http://www.aarp.org/politics-society/advocacy/info-07-2012/health-benefits-of-nature.html>

3 <http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0155-free-credit-reports>

4 <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/02/money-stress.aspx>

5 <http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/news-room/News-Releases/2014/Study-Suggests-Home-Cooking-Main-Ingredient-in-Healthier-Diet.html>

Improve Your Occupational Wellness

Employed? Maintain a balance between work life and leisure activities. Unemployed and looking for work? Use the time you are looking for work as time to keep your skills sharp and continue to build connections by volunteering. Not working because you are retired, a student, or unable to work? Find meaning and purpose in the ways in which you chose to spend your time. Work does not have to be synonymous with a job. You can find work that is exciting and important to you.

Rationale

Enjoying what you do and doing what you joy has the capacity to affect all areas of wellness. You will reduce stress, increase moments of happiness and excitement, and feel empowered through engaging in satisfying work, whether it is volunteer work, a paid job, community service, an internship, or schoolwork.

Physical Wellness

Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep.

Improve Your Physical Wellness

Try incorporating yoga into your life—this can be done at home, with a book, with a DVD, or the internet, or in a group setting in a class. Some classes have pay-what-you-can models, while others are simply free.

Rationale

Nearly two-thirds of yoga users reported that as a result of practicing yoga, they were motivated to exercise more regularly, and 4 in 10 reported they were motivated to eat healthier. Connecting this to emotional health, more than 80 percent of yoga users reported reduced stress because of practicing yoga.⁶

Social Wellness

Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.

Improve Your Social Wellness

Develop a sense of belonging with your community—participate in community meetings, attend community events, or spend time in a neighborhood park.

Rationale

Getting to know your neighbors contributes to something known as “social capital”. By developing a social network and social supports, you are helping your emotional wellness, too. “It has been proposed that high levels of social capital result in improved mental well-being in both individuals and communities and that enhancing the social resources of groups may allow for improvement in overall population mental health.”⁷

6 <http://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/americans-who-practice-yoga-report-better-wellness-health-behaviors>

7 Bassett, E., & Moore, S. (2013). Mental health and social capital: Social capital as a promising initiative to improving the mental health of communities. In A. Rodriguez-Morales (Ed.), *Current Topics in Public Health*. InTech. Retrieved from <http://www.intechopen.com/books/current-topics-in-public-health/mental-health-and-social-capital-social-capital-as-a-promising-initiative-to-improving-the-mental-he>

Spiritual Wellness

Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

Improve Your Spiritual Wellness

Take a mindful approach to your day. While there are formal mindfulness training programs, like Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction, you can start with getting in tune with the present moment. Mindfulness is about living in the now, not in the past and not in the future. When you eat breakfast, for example, focus on breakfast. Focus on the food's smell, taste, texture, and the sounds of the food in your mouth.

Rationale

Mindfulness reduces psychological distress, lessens emotional reactivity, and increases immune functioning. It has been shown to decrease symptoms of anxiety, depression, substance use, eating disorders, and chronic pain.⁸

⁸ Hölzel, B. K., Carmody, J., Vangel, M., Congleton, C., Yerramsetti, S. M., Gard, T., & Lazar, S. W. (2011). Mindfulness practice leads to increases in regional brain gray matter density. *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, 19136-43. doi:10.1016/j.pscychresns.2010.08.006