



Wellness

-by Dr Anuradha Shah

Wellness is often confused with health even though the two terms are not synonymous. Yet most of us want to be well and healthy. So what is the difference between health and wellness?

Being healthy means being disease free, both physically and mentally.

Wellness, on the other hand, is more all-encompassing. It involves various aspects of well-being, specifically physical, emotional, occupational, spiritual, social, environmental, and intellectual. It includes physical health, but it also is so much more than that.

True wellness is not a state we reach. Rather, it is a balance we try to maintain. Exercising, stopping smoking, or losing weight will make you healthier, but it does not mean that you are well in the 'wellness' sense. You can be healthy (free of disease) but also have other areas of your life that are out of balance, meaning that you are not truly well.

So what are the different aspects of wellness.

Physical

Regular exercise, eating healthy food, losing weight, taking your daily vitamins, avoiding smoking and drugs, getting adequate rest, maintaining proper blood pressure, and limiting your alcohol intake all contribute towards being healthy and disease free. It is one of the components of wellness.

Emotional

Our emotions are another component of wellness. It includes being happy, positive, optimistic, content, free of stress, forgiving, and at peace. When the emotional aspect of our lives is out of synch, we are codependent, miserable, stressed, always wanting, pessimistic, and resentful.

Occupational

This aspect of wellness has to do with our careers and work. Are you happy going to work? Is work satisfying and is there opportunity for growth? Are you rewarded appropriately? Are you a workaholic? Many people don't like their jobs and merely go to work daily for the money. Since our occupations require a large portion of our time, it is a vital part of wellness.



Spiritual

Spiritual wellness does not have to include religion, although it can. It is concerned with the meaning of our lives, being aware of our existence, being able to forgive when wronged, and being kind, helping others, empathy, compassion and a sense of wrong and right.

Social

Social wellness includes the quality of our relationships with others, our ability to interact with others, being involved in the community, learning from others, trust, honesty, and helping others while also receiving help from them. There are some people who are miserable because they cannot have a connection with others and are lonely.

Environmental

Do you care about the environment and respect the fact that its resources are limited? So do you make an effort to have as little an impact as possible on the environment and do you replenish what you take? Do you do your part to keep the world healthy for your children and future generations? All these factors affect our planet and therefore, affect us and everyone else.

Intellectual

Intellectual wellness is important because human beings are designed to grow intellectually. Do you stimulate your mind by engaging in activities such as reading and problem solving? Do you leave your comfort zone and challenge yourself? Do you improve your creativity using art, music and other creative pursuits?

If your mind and body are free of disease, you are probably healthy. But wellness is a balance that one must constantly strive to maintain. It is this delicate balancing act between the physical, emotional, occupational, spiritual, social, environmental, and intellectual aspects of our lives that dictates our wellness. It is not a destination point one can reach. It requires daily effort. Once we understand and grasp the difference between wellness and health, we can not only make the effort to be healthy, but also aim to experience real wellness.

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Bhaveshwar Vihar, 383, S.V.P. Road, Prarthana Samaj, Charni Road, Mumbai 400 004.