



## WHAT INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY

# NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WELLNESS

### Why Is Wellness Important?

The short answer: For individuals with behavioral health conditions, **embracing wellness can improve quality and years of life.**

A study by the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) found that individuals with severe mental illness (SMI) die years earlier than those without these disorders, most often of heart disease.<sup>i</sup> They also experience diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and obesity at a rate that is 1.5 to 2 times that of the general population.<sup>ii, iii, iv</sup>

### Wellness Matters

Consider the true story of Jane, a person in recovery who got a wake-up call during a health screening, where she was told that her blood pressure was dangerously high. Jane had already lost two sisters to heart disease, so she decided to lose the weight she had gained while taking antidepressant medication. “After losing 40 pounds, [my blood pressure] dropped like a stone,” she said.

*“Paying attention and taking action saved my life.”*

Jane’s example shows the importance of considering both physical and mental health. Wellness is more than the absence of disease or stress; it refers to overall well-being. It’s having purpose in life, participating actively in work and play, and having relationships that give you joy.<sup>v</sup>

SAMHSA’s Wellness Initiative supports embracing the Eight Dimensions of Wellness to achieve improved quality of life and longevity.<sup>vi</sup>

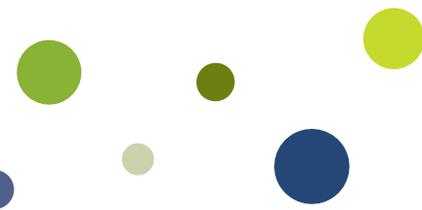
There are many ways to enhance well-being and recovery from mental or substance use conditions and trauma. Here are a few other activities:

- **Stopping smoking** is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health. Data shows that individuals in recovery are 25 to 40 percent more likely to die from heart disease than others, with smoking being a major contributor.<sup>vii</sup>
- In 2008 and 2009, Australian researchers found that **belonging to a social group**, such as a volunteer group can improve both physical and mental health.<sup>viii</sup>



### WELLNESS

Source: Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.





## The Eight Dimensions of Wellness

What wellness means and what we focus on varies from person to person. Yet it is useful to think about practical ways we can improve our wellness in each dimension. Here are several examples.

**EMOTIONAL**—*Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships*

- Be aware of and listen to your feelings.
- Express your feelings to people you trust.

**FINANCIAL**—*Satisfaction with current and future financial situations*

- Be thoughtful and creative about your budgeting and spending.
- As needed, meet with financial professionals who provide free or low-cost services for guidance.

**SOCIAL**—*Developing a sense of connection, belonging, a well-developed support system*

- Make at least one social connection per day by calling, e-mailing, or visiting someone.
- Get active in a support group.

**SPIRITUAL**—*Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life*

- Make time for practices that enhance your sense of connection to self, nature, and others.
- Take time to discover what values, principles, and beliefs are most important to you.

**OCCUPATIONAL**—*Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived through one's work*

- Work toward a career in a field you are passionate about or a volunteer activity that has meaning for you.
- Communicate with your supervisor regularly and get support when needed.

**PHYSICAL**—*Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep, and nutrition*

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator; replace driving with walking or bicycling when possible.
- Get enough sleep—your body needs it to rejuvenate and stay well!

**INTELLECTUAL**—*Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills*

- Research a topic that interests you and share what you learned with others.
- Find creative outlets that stimulate your mind and sense of curiosity.

**ENVIRONMENTAL**—*Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being*

- Appreciate nature and the beauty that surrounds you.
- Seek out music and other experiences that have a calming effect on your well-being.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
<http://www.hhs.gov>

SAMHSA-HRSA Center for Integrated Health Solutions  
<http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/>

healthfinder®  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov>

Million Hearts®  
<http://www.millionhearts.hhs.gov>

STAR Center  
<http://www.consumerstar.org>

National Empowerment Center  
1-800-POWER2U (1-800-769-3728)  
<http://www.power2u.org>

National Wellness Institute  
<http://www.nationalwellness.org>

Peerlink National Technical Assistance Program  
<http://www.peerlinktac.org>

### ENDNOTES

- i Parks, J., Radke, A. Q., & Mazade, N. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Measurement of health status for people with serious mental illness*. Alexandria, VA: NASMHPD Medical Directors Council.
- ii Fagioli, A., Frank, E., Scott, J. A., Turkin, S., & Kupfer, D. J. (2005). Metabolic syndrome in bipolar disorder: Findings from the Bipolar Disorder Center for Pennsylvanians. *Bipolar Disorders*, 7(5), 424-430.
- iii McEvoy, J. P., Meyer, J. M., Goff, D. C., et al. (2005). Prevalence of the metabolic syndrome in patients with schizophrenia: Baseline results from the Clinical Antipsychotic Trials of Intervention Effectiveness (CATIE) schizophrenia trial and comparison with national estimates from NHANES III. *Schizophrenia Research*, 80(1), 19-32.
- iv Newcomer, J. W. (2005). Second-generation (atypical) antipsychotics and metabolic effects: A comprehensive literature review. *CNS Drugs*, 19(suppl 1), 1-93.
- v Dunn, H. L. (1961). *High-Level Wellness*. Arlington, VA: Beatty Press.
- vi Swarbrick, M. (2006). A wellness approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311-314.
- vii Health Behavior News Service. (2009). Heart Disease a "Silent Killer" in Patients With Severe Mental Illness." *Medical News Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/170934.php>
- viii University of Exeter. (2009). Groups Are Key to Good Health. NewsRx. Retrieved from <http://www.newsrx.com/health-articles/1625818.html>