

How Do the Eight Dimensions of Wellness Affect Your Life?

Wellness is a term Union Members all know and use often, but what exactly is it and what does it mean for a person to be well? According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), wellness means overall well-being. It incorporates the mental, emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. Each aspect of wellness can affect overall quality of life, so it's important to consider all aspects of health. This is especially important for people with mental health and substance use conditions because wellness directly relates to the quality and longevity of your life (1).

The eight dimensions of wellness are emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual. All are very important to someone's overall well-being. In the coming paragraphs I will explain in more detail, each dimension and also give you a few ways to make improvements in each dimension.

SAMSHA's Eight Dimensions of Wellness



Emotional wellness is the ability to cope effectively with life and create satisfying relationships. Life has a way of throwing us curve balls and can be very difficult at times. The relationships Union Members create and nurture to give us a shoulder to lean on when that curve ball comes our way. One way to improve emotional wellness is to put a positive spin on life situations. Try to cultivate a positive feeling even during negative times throughout your life. This is much easier said than done, but with practice can be achieved. You do need to be mentally aware of your emotions and when a negative feeling arises from attempt to change it into a positive one. Play a favorite song, chat with a close friend, play with a pet are just a few examples of how to cultivate positive feelings. Rejection and loss are two major issues that can have a big impact on our emotional well-being. It's important to recognize the feelings you have during times of

rejection and times of loss, but not important to dwell in them or remain in that negative emotional state. Remind yourself how much worth you have by listing the positive attributes you possess in the area of life that you were rejected, whether it's your work life, dating life, social life etc. Finding meaning in a loss can be difficult, but can improve your emotional well-being. You may want to develop a greater appreciation for those who are still here, reevaluate your values and ideals, or honor what or who has been lost. These are only a few examples of how to find meaning during a time of loss. Remember emotional wellness doesn't mean avoiding bad or difficult times but rather it's the ability to cope effectively during them.

Environmental wellness means good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being. It's important to feel good about where you live, work, play, and wherever else you may spend time. Feeling good for the planet is also a major part of environmental wellness. Here are a few ways to improve your environmental well-being. The first is an obvious one. Clean and organize your living space. Then clean and organize your workspace. After these two tasks are done you should feel a greater sense of comfort and much less anxiety. This is a big boost for your environmental well-being. Now it's time to take a look at the big picture, and that's the planet Union Members live in. Start recycling, use less water and pick up trash when you come across it on the ground. Union Members have to live in this environment, so it's important Union Members each do our part to keep it clean.

Financial Wellness is the satisfaction of your current and future financial situations. It's not about how much you make that makes you financially well, but rather are you satisfied with how much you make? Someone who makes \$30,000 a year could be more financially well than someone who makes \$100,000 per annum. It's a proven fact that those who are financially well are more productive at work. Planning is the key to attaining financial wellness. It's important to plan a budget, set goals, plan a saving's strategy, and plan for retirement. These are just a few of the plans that need to be made to have financial wellness in your life. Once the planning is complete it's time to stick to your plans and put them into action. A saving's plan will create financial margins in your life for those unexpected car/house repairs or whatever else might come up that will cost you money. Taking these steps will help guide you to a financially well future.

Intellectual Wellness is recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills. A person who is intellectually well never stopped learning. They're thirsty for knowledge and recognize that there is so much more to be learned. There is a certain feeling you get when you achieve something that you have never done before. It's that positive feeling that drives us to become more intellectually well. Some ways to improve your intellectual wellness are to improve time management, remove objectivity, and improve your critical thinking. It's important to make time for reading a book, or learning a new hobby. Remove objectivity by keeping an open mind about new ideas, insights, thoughts, expressions, and values. Always question and keep your brain active, and you will begin to improve your intellectual wellness.

Occupational Wellness is personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work. You need to have a feeling of contribution and achievement in the work that you do. Developing occupational wellness allows you to communicate your values through whatever work you choose to do. This could be paid work or un-paid work. Here are some ideas on how you can improve your occupational wellness. Start by reflecting on what occupations will leave you feeling gratified. Look into what tasks you enjoy doing. Also think about what occupational tasks do you dislike or find burdensome. Search for volunteer work that you find interesting. Also set career goals for yourself and constantly be working toward achieving those goals. Taking these steps will lead you to have more occupational wellness in your life.

Physical Wellness is recognizing the need for physical activity. Exercise offers many benefits to a person's overall well-being. It improves your chances of living longer and healthier, relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety, improves your mood, and prevents weight gain. Exercise is just one facet to being physically well. Taking care of your physical body by showering, brushing your teeth, and going to the doctor for checkups are all ways to improve your physical wellness. Treating the body with respect will ultimately lead you to be more physically well.

Social Wellness is developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system. This is why spending quality time with close friends is so important. One of the best things you could do to become more socially well is to become a contributing member of your community. You can volunteer and at the same time you will meet new people and gain new social skills. Communication is a key factor in becoming socially well. Good communication skills will allow you to resolve problems that you may have with other people that you socialize with on a day to day basis. These are a few ideas to lead you to become more socially well.

Spiritual wellness is expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life. Spiritual wellness is unique for everyone. It's the deepest part of you that gives meaning in your life. Some ways to improve spiritual wellness are to meditate, pray, and listen to affirmations. A spiritually well person is ok with spending time alone and reflecting. It's important to take time to search into the things that provide meaning in your life. It could be your beliefs, values, and morals that give meaning in your life. Make sure that these things guide the decisions you make as you live out your life. Practice these tips and you will become more spiritually well.

These eight dimensions to wellness all play an important role in our lives. Focus on the areas that you are weak in and start from there; it can seem a bit overwhelming if you try to change everything at once. As you work in the areas that you're struggling in most, you will find that stress in your life will start to decrease, and positive feelings will start to increase. You'll begin to produce more feel good neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin. Life will surely be more enjoyable.

To learn more about the eight dimensions of wellness visit www.samhsa.gov/wellness-initiative
Reference: Source Adapted from Swarbrick, M. (2006). A Wellness Approach, Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, 29(4), 311-314.