

# TAKING CHARGE OF MY LIFE AND HEALTH

## PARTICIPANTS GUIDE

Whole Health website: [www.wellvets.com](http://www.wellvets.com)

Whole Health Scheduling; (314) 289-6583

Rev 0 (3.5.2021)  
508 Compliant



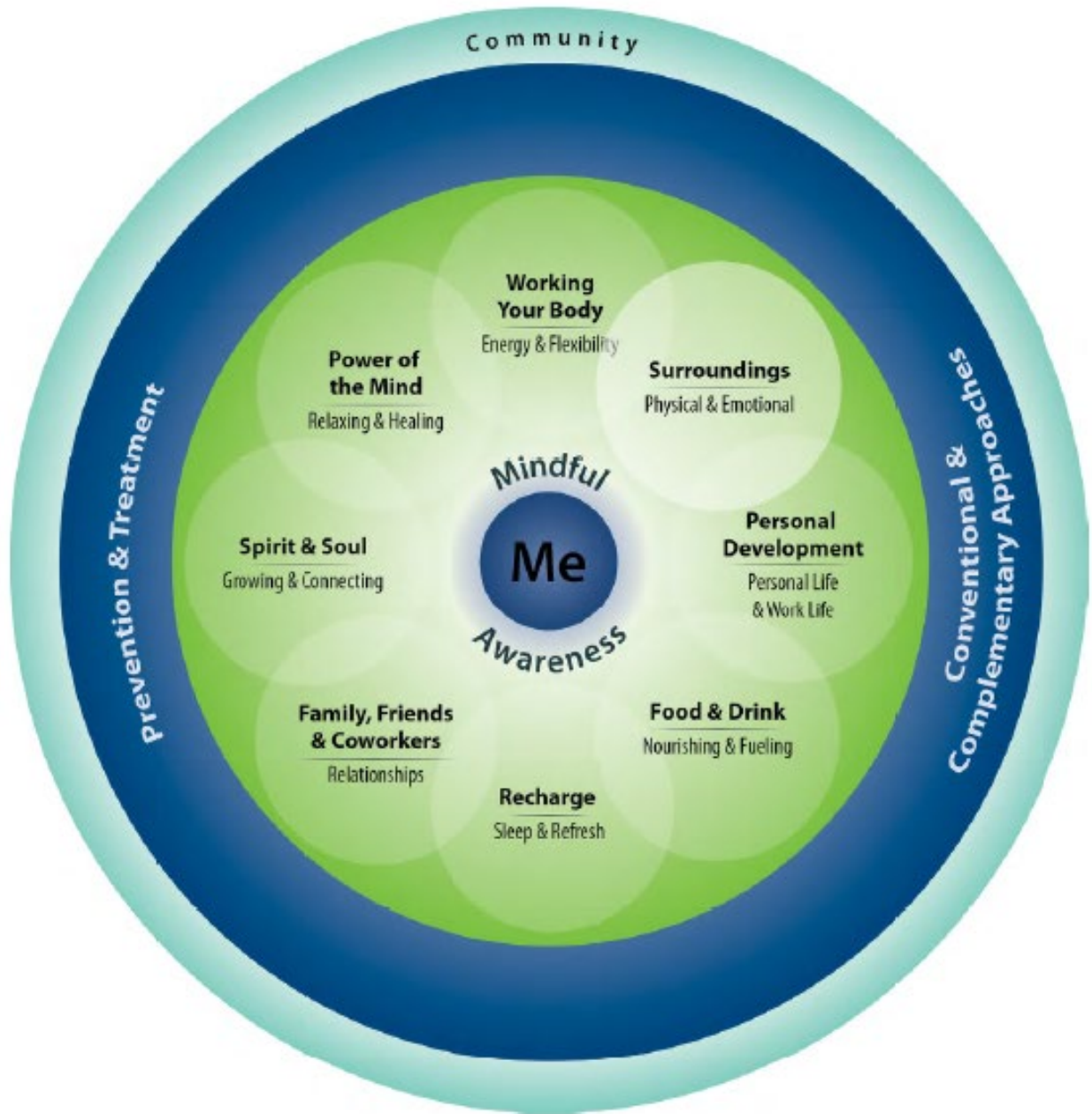
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CIRCLE OF HEALTH



## SESSION 1

### GROUP GUIDELINES

- **Honor Confidentiality**

Maintaining every group member's confidentiality is a key part of the Whole Health Facilitated Group Program. Everyone needs to feel safe and trust that what happens in the group stays in the group. This means not sharing what you hear in the group with anyone outside the group. It also means that if you see another group member in the hallway, you will not ask them how they are doing on group-related activities. Feel free to share any of your own learning experiences throughout the program to anyone at any time, but you should do so without talking about others in the group.
- **Speak Honestly**

Each session will involve some discussion, practices, and some paired activities. Your active participation will help you get as much as possible out of this group. Your honesty, with yourself and other members of the group, will support that goal.
- **Listen Respectfully:**
  - Listen with an open mind and open heart
  - Let everyone have a turn speaking
  - Not interrupting each other
  - Not giving advice
  - Let each group member come to his or her own conclusions
  - Respect differences – we are not all going to agree and that is okay
- **Start and finish on time**

We all have various responsibilities and time commitments beyond this group. Respect each other's time and commitments. Every effort should be made to arrive to class on time and end the class on time. It can be disruptive to have someone enter or leave when you are speaking or in the middle of an exercise. Please respect your fellow group members by arriving on time for every session and remaining until the session is complete.
- **Turn off your personal electronic devices (phones, PDA's, pagers, etc.)**

Unexpected beeps, rings and other noises are distracting and take away from the learning environment. Please turn off your cell phone, PDA, pager, or other electronic devices during the session. If there are issues for which you need to leave your phone on vibrate, please let us know and step outside to take or make any calls.
- **Additional group guidelines:**

## THE NINE ATTITUDES OF MINDFUL AWARENESS

- **Beginner’s Mind**—Being curious and not thinking that you already know something. Asking questions and being excited about how your mind works, asking questions like: Who is seeing? Who is thinking?
- **Non-judging** - A gentle state of non-judgment, being kind to yourself, and allowing what is. Trying not to compare, label, or find fault.
- **Patience** - Let things happen as they need to and in their own time. Letting go of the idea that you have to “get somewhere, do something, or make something happen.”
- **Non-striving** - Mindful awareness is about being, not doing, if it feels like you’re working too hard you probably are. It’s a way of being, being awake to what’s happening in your life rather than what is happening in your mind.
- **Acceptance** - Seeing things as they are. It is what it is. Try to be with things as they are. Let go of the stories the mind creates and accept the present moment for what it is.
- **Letting go** - Not having a set agenda for what “should” happen. Being open to all possibilities and outcomes.
- **Trust** - As awareness grows, so does trust in one’s emotions; be yourself in every way. Have faith in how you move through the world. Trust yourself and what you know.
- **Gratitude** - Not taking things for granted, appreciation of what you already have. Being thankful for the totality of our experience, the good, the bad and the neutral. Awareness that every challenge is an opportunity to grow and learn.
- **Generosity** - Be generous with yourself; give yourself time and compassion. Be present for others, allow yourself to be authentic; don’t mask your feelings or who you are. Allow others to be themselves. Truly listen and pay attention to others.

What area(s) stand out to you and where can you see an opportunity for improvement in yourself?

PERSONAL HEALTH INVENTORY

You are the expert on you! The first and most important step in creating your roadmap to your healthiest life is to step back from your health concerns and think about your life. What really matters to you? What do you want your health for? Sometimes, this can be hard to figure out. This workbook will help you to think about where you are now and where you *want* to be. Over the course of the next 6 weeks take the time to think broadly and openly as you explore each area of the Circle of Health.

YOUR MISSION, ASPIRATIONS & PURPOSE:

1. What is my Mission, Aspiration or Purpose (MAP) in life?

2. What REALLY matters to you in your life?

3. What brings you a sense of Joy & Happiness?

4. On a scale of 1 (being miserable) to 5 (being great), where do you feel you are in the following areas?

Physical Well-being:

1	2	3	4	5
Miserable				Great

Mental / Emotional Well-being:

1	2	3	4	5
Miserable				Great

Life: How is it to live your day-to-day life?

1	2	3	4	5
Miserable				Great



**WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE...**

For each area, consider where you are **now** and where you would like to be. In the “Where you are” box write the reasons you chose that number. In the “Where you would like to be” box write changes that might make this area better for you. Try to fill out as much as possible but you do not have to write in every area or in all areas at one time. As we progress through the course you might want to come back and complete areas or change your answers in “Where you would like to be”. This is perfectly acceptable. It is okay to just circle the numbers in areas you are not sure about. In each area rate yourself 1 (low) to 5 (high).

Working the Body: <i>“Energy and Flexibility”</i> includes movement and physical activities like walking, dancing, gardening, sports, lifting weights, yoga, cycling, swimming and working out in a gym.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Recharge: <i>“Sleep and Refresh”</i> Getting enough rest, relaxation and sleep.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Food and Drink: <i>“Nourish and Fuel”</i> eating healthy, balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. Drinking enough water and limiting sodas, sweetened drinks, and alcohol.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Personal Development: <i>“Personal life &amp; Work Life”</i> learning and growing. Developing abilities and talents. Balancing responsibilities where you live, volunteer, and work.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Family, Friends & Coworkers: <i>“Relationships”</i> feeling listened to and connected to people you love and care about. The quality of your communication with family, friends and people you work with.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Spirit & Soul: <i>“Growing &amp; Connecting”</i> having a sense of purpose and meaning in your life. Feeling connected to something larger than yourself. Finding strength in difficult times.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Surroundings: <i>“Physical &amp; Emotional”</i> feeling safe. Having comfortable, healthy spaces where you work and live. The quality of lighting, color, air, and water. Decreasing unpleasant clutter, noises, and smells.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

Power of the Mind: <i>“Strengthen &amp; Listen”</i> tapping into the power of your mind to health and cope. Using mind-body techniques like relaxation, breathing, or guided imagery.									
Where you are:					Where you would like to be:				
1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
What are the reasons you chose this number?					What changes could you make to help you get there?				

**PROFESSIONAL CARE**

*Prevention:* On a scale of 1-5, circle the number that best describes how up to date you are on your preventive care such as a flu shot, cholesterol check, cancer screening, and dental care.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very Much

*Clinical Care:* If you are working with a healthcare professional, on a scale of 1-5, circle the number that best describes how well you understand your health problems, the treatment plan, and your role in your health.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	A little bit	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very Much

REFLECTIONS: Now that you have thought about all of these areas, what is your vision of your best possible health? What would your life look like? What kind of activities would you be doing?

## VALUES

Circle all the *Core* values that are important to your Mission, Aspirations & Purpose:

Accountability	Friendship	Quality of Work
Alertness	Gratitude	Reliability
Calm	Hard Work	Resourcefulness
Challenge	Honesty	Respect for others
Change	Honor	Results-oriented
Cleanliness / orderliness	Inclusive	Safety
Commitment	Independence	Security
Communication	Individuality	Self-reliance
Community	Integrity	Service (to others)
Competition	Justice	Simplicity
Concern for others	Kindness	Solving problems
Cooperation	Knowledge	Speed
Creativity	Leadership	Stability
Discipline	Loyalty	Success
Diversity	Meaning	Teamwork
Equality	Openness	Tolerance
Excellence	Patriotism	Tradition
Fairness	Peace / non-violence	Tranquility
Faith	Personal growth	Trust
Family	Pleasure	Unity
Financial security	Privacy	Wealth / Prosperity
Freedom	Progress	Wisdom

What other values not listed are important to you?

Choose a value you circled and describe a time you lived by that value.

Has there been a time in your life when you found it difficult to live by that same value?

## AN INTRODUCTION TO POWER OF THE MIND

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.” --William James

What is meant by Power of the Mind?

The mind is the gate keeper for everything that happens in your life. What you think can influence behaviors and attitudes and control your actions and reactions.

- Your mood and the way you think can impact any health condition you may have.
- Your mind can cause you to feel worse or more at ease.
- Negative thoughts and attitudes often lead to an increase in stress which negatively affects your health.

Consider the following when thinking how power of the mind can affect your health:

I might want to enhance my power of the mind to:

- Reduce stress and relax a little more
- Be more positive about my life and relationships
- Have the courage to try new things
- Reduce my focus on negatives in my life and relationships
- Improve how I feel about my mind and body
- Other

I might consider the following approaches to enhance my power of the mind:

- Psychological approaches including hypnosis, imagery, biofeedback, or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Art Therapies including painting, music, dance, or other forms of creativity
- Breathing exercises
- Journaling
- Meditation and mindfulness
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Yoga, Tai Chi, or other movement activities

What I can do to increase my power of the mind:

- Recognize that I have a choice about how I want to view my life and the world
- Recognize that how I view my life has an impact on my health and well-being
- Choose one of the therapies above and work with a professional to practice it
- Determine what causes my stress and what I can do to better manage that stress
- Pay attention to my emotions and the causes me to experience those emotions
- Stay active

Note: These are general guidelines. Before making any major changes please consult with your primary care team, a mental health provider or other qualified medical team member.

How do you see *Power of the Mind* being beneficial to you?

How could *Power of the Mind* be incorporated into my everyday life?

## FOOD & DRINK

“What most people don’t realize is that food is not just calories; it’s information. It actually contains messages that connect to every cell in the body.” – Dr. Mark Hyman

How does food impact our health?

The food we eat gives our bodies the information and materials they need to function properly. If we don't get the right information, our metabolic processes suffer and our health declines.

If we get too much food, or food that gives our bodies the wrong instructions, we can become overweight, undernourished, and at risk for the development of diseases and conditions, such as arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease.

Webster's Dictionary defines medicine as: "*The science and art dealing with the maintenance of health and the prevention, alleviation, or cure of disease.*" In short, what we eat is central to our health.

## FOOD & DRINK CHOICES

Consider the following when thinking about your Food & Drink choices:

I eat because:

- I’m bored
- I’m hungry
- I’m stressed
- Out of habit
- Social setting
- Other

I might want to change my diet to impact:

- Mood
- Energy level
- Weight
- Sense of pain
- Quality & length of life
- Allergies
- Other

I might want to change my diet by reducing:

- Sugar
- Salt
- Processed foods
- Sodas and fruit juices (high in sugar)
- Red meats
- Alcohol or caffeine
- Food intake
- Other

I might add the following to my diet to improve my health:

- More fruits & vegetables
- Unprocessed foods
- More water
- More whole grains
- Other

These are general guidelines. Please discuss any major change with your physician or nutritionist prior to making those changes.



## HOW CAN I EAT MINDFULLY?

*Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way. On purpose, in the present moment and nonjudgmentally. Left to itself, the mind wanders through all kinds of thoughts—including thoughts expressing anger, craving, depression, revenge, self-pity, etc. As we indulge in these thoughts, we reinforce those emotions in our hearts and cause ourselves to suffer. By purposefully directing our awareness away from such thoughts and towards some “anchor”, we decrease their effect on our lives and we create instead a space of freedom where calmness and contentment can grow.*

Ways you can eat more mindfully:

- Eat with your non-dominant hand.
- Eat while sitting down.
- Eat without a TV, newspaper, or computer.
- Eat with chopsticks.
- Go around the table and each say something you are grateful for – a great activity for kids
- Before you eat, sit quietly for at least 30 seconds. Smell your food and think about where it came from. Picture the item growing or roaming in its environment. Think about the steps that foods take to end up on your plate...growth, harvesting, processing, transportation, purchase, and preparation. Give thanks.
- Concentrate on your arm movements as you bring your food to your mouth.
- Chew your food 10-15 times per bite.
  - Pay attention to taste and texture and how it changes.
  - Swallow when the food is uniformly smooth.
- Take a sip of water, tea, or black coffee between bites.
- Put the proper portions of food on your plate and try to make the meal last at least 20 minutes.

Tips for success:

- Recruit someone else to learn mindful eating, so you can share your experiences.
- Remember: there are no “do’s” or “don’ts”. Do what makes sense in your life and what brings you joy.
- Laugh with yourself when mindfulness isn’t easy. We are more successful when we have fun.
- Mindfulness is difficult to master but you can’t fail if you keep trying.

[http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/service/modules/8/M8\\_CT\\_Mindful\\_Eating.pdf](http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/service/modules/8/M8_CT_Mindful_Eating.pdf)

## HYDRATION: WHY IS DRINKING WATER IMPORTANT?

How much of the human body is water? You would be surprised to learn that **water** makes up about 60% of our body weight. Water is vital to almost every function in our body. It acts as a building block, a solvent for chemical reactions and a transport material for nutrients and waste.

Water also helps to maintain blood volume allowing for proper circulation. It helps regulate our body temperature. And, it acts as a shock absorber for our joints and our brain. It helps to lubricate the linings of our inner organs and maintains healthy kidney function.

## WATER YOUR BODY: 6 BENEFITS

- **Improve physical performance:** During exercise activity, our bodies use a lot of water. Staying hydrated both before and after exercise helps to protect your body from harm and improves your overall performance. It can reduce fatigue, improve endurance, lower your maximum heart rate and water helps you to be less sore after activity.
- **Helps you to lose weight:** Increasing your water intake may help you achieve better weight loss results. Studies have shown that people who are on diets lose more weight when they also increase their water intake. One study showed that people who drank 500 ml of water before each daily meal lost an average of 4.6 lbs. more over a 12-week period than those who didn't.
- **Boosts your mood:** One study showed that people who regularly drank < 40 ounces of water per day experienced significantly less confusion, bewilderment, fatigue, and sleepiness when they increased their water intake to ~ 84 ounces of water per day.
- **Boosts your brain power:** Drinking water may improve your overall cognitive function. Several studies have shown that people drinking water during cognitive tasks performed much better than those who did not drink water during the same task. Studies have shown that even mild dehydration can impair short-term cognitive function.
- **Prevents headaches:** Water deprivation is a common cause of headache. When dehydration occurs, the brain may start to shrink and pull away from the skull triggering the headache. This phenomenon is reduced or eliminated when people rehydrate. Dehydration can trigger migraines in some those who are prone to getting migraines or headaches.
- **Protects against disease:** Water plays a significant role in disease prevention. Proper hydration may be useful in preventing a variety of health conditions and diseases including kidney stones, constipation, asthma, urinary tract infections, coronary heart disease and even the possibility of some cancers.

## How much water should you drink?

- Several factors, including age, gender, and activity level, will determine how much water you should consume per day. As we age, we may tend to feel less thirsty which increases the risk of dehydration. We feel less thirsty – we drink less water.
- The general rule of thumb is at least ~ 75 ounces per day for women and ~ 100 ounces per day for men.

University Health News, 2018 / By Kathleen Jade, MD

**HEALTHY CHOICES:** Keeping in mind the following areas covered today:

Power of the Mind: “Strengthen & Listen – Tapping into the power of your mind to heal and cope. Using mind- body techniques like relaxation, breathing or guided imagery.

- and -

Food and Drink: “Nourish & Fuel” – Eating healthy, balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. Drinking enough water & limiting sodas, sweetened drinks & alcohol.

Which area will you choose to explore this week:

What could you do this week to start making improvements in this area?

How do you feel working on this improvement will impact your health in a positive way?

## WORKING THE BODY

“Exercise to stimulate, not to annihilate. The world wasn't formed in a day, and neither were we. Set small goals and build upon them.” - Lee Haney

Regular exercise is good for you, and it can help you lose weight. But like many Americans, you may find it difficult to start making changes to improve this area. The good news is that it's never too late to start. You can start slowly and find ways to fit more physical activity into your life. To get the most benefit, you should try to get the recommended amount of exercise for your age. If you can do it, the payoff is that you will feel better, help prevent or control many diseases, and might even live longer.

Some things to consider:

What are the benefits of being more physically active?

- Live longer
- More energy, less fatigue
- Slower aging
- Better sleep
- Better brain function
- Lose weight
- Look better
- Prevent heart disease, diabetes, obesity, dementia, cancer, or other health issues
- Other:

What keeps you from moving your body (value conflicts)?

- Not enough time
- Not enough money
- Doesn't feel good
- Don't see the value in it
- It hurts
- Not sure what to do or how to begin
- Other:

Consider choosing an activity you enjoy or one you may be willing to do regularly.

- What might this activity be?
- How much and how often?

How might you get additional information or support?

- Work with a recreational therapist
- Join a gym
- Find a good trainer
- Join an exercise class
- Find an exercise partner
- Talk to others about how they do it
- Ask your health team for support if there are health issues involved
- Other:

FITT PRINCIPLE WORKSHEET

When starting any activity program, it is important to be specific about the type of activity, how often you want to perform the activity and what you are trying to achieve with the activity. The FITT principle provides an easy method of developing a starting point for your program.

- Frequency:            how many times a week (or day)
- Intensity:            low, moderate, or intense. A good rule of thumb is if you are doing the activity and you can talk but not sing – it is moderate exercise.
- Type of Activity     walking, swimming, yoga, etc...
- Time                    how many minutes each activity session will be.

Exercise safely:

- Keep Safety in Mind: you should be cleared by your primary care provider before starting any new activity program.
- Be aware of fall risk: ensure you have any assistive devices you might need (cane, braces, walker, etc...)
- Tuning into your body: start any new activity gently

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What activity would I like to start doing?
- What benefits do I see myself getting from this activity?
- How confident am I that I will start and then continue this activity?
- What help might I need to incorporate this activity into my daily / weekly routine?

FITT ACTIVITY PLAN

Activity:	
How many days a week I will do it:	
How many minutes a day I will do it:	
How vigorously I will do it: (low, moderate, intense)	

## RECHARGE: REST AND RELAXATION

“We need time to defuse, to contemplate. Just as in sleep our brains relax and give us dreams, so at some time in the day we need to disconnect, reconnect, and look around us.” - Laurie Colwin

Sleeping well is vital to experiencing both physical and mental well-being. Getting an adequate amount of sleep regularly is essential to experiencing well-being, research indicates. Yet sleep deprivation is a common problem. Let these famous quotes on sleep and wellness motivate you to get enough sleep regularly:

What do you think prevents you from getting good rest?

- Worry
- Not tired at night
- Environmental issues (noise, light, etc.)
- Pain or discomfort
- Other

To improve sleep, some have found that these practices may help:

- Going to bed and getting up at the same times every day
- Practice Mindfulness
- Pay attention to daytime napping and how it impacts my sleep
- Minimize drinking alcohol and eating before bed
- Pay attention to what I eat and drink and how it affects my sleep
- Reduce looking at lit screens such as TV or computer before going to bed
- Stay active during the day
- Consider earplugs or a sleep mask
- Improve sleeping environment (noise, comfort, light, temperature, mattress)
- Rule out sleep disorders and other health problems that compromise your sleep
  - If you snore a lot, or you stop breathing in your sleep
  - Make sure you are managing pain and doing it safely
  - Get help for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mood problems
  - Try not to overdo sleep medications
- Ask for information or support from your VA providers

You might also consider other ways to recharge your energy

- Take breaks during the day at work
- Ask your healthcare provider if light therapy would help
- See if relaxation practices help
- Find time for vacations, hobbies, and non-work interests

People who get over 7-8 hours of sleep a night have a lower risk of:

- Death from all causes
- Being overweight
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Cholesterol problems
- Stroke and heart attacks

What can you do more often to “recharge”?

**HEALTHY CHOICES:** Keeping in mind the following areas covered today:

Working the Body: Energy & Flexibility – This includes movement and physical activities like walking, dancing, gardening, sports, lifting weights, yoga, cycling, swimming & working out at the gym.

- and -

Recharge: Sleep & Refresh – Getting enough rest, relaxation & sleep.

Which area will you choose to explore this week:

What could you do this week to start making improvements in this area?

How do you feel working on this improvement will impact your health in a positive way?



## ASSESSING YOUR SURROUNDINGS – DO MY SURROUNDINGS AFFECT MY HEALTH?

For most people, there is a strong connection between where they are and how they feel. Your breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, stress levels, and brain chemicals are all affected by your environment: <sup>(1)</sup> You may not think that this is true for you, but there are a lot of things happening in your body that you do not even realize.

How can I figure out if my surroundings are good for me? It's intuitive really; trust your gut.

Your surroundings include where you live, where you work and your emotional surroundings.

Consider the following:

- Is there a location that makes you feel happy or sad?
- Are there places that cause you stress (like a doctor's office)?
- Is there a tangible item that makes you happy, sad, or mad? What about it makes you feel this way?

Some ideas to consider when thinking about where you live. I could possibly:

- Improve my lack of heat, electricity, or air conditioning
- Consider getting a home or living space. I could work with the VA around housing options.
- Improve my safety where I live (Consider domestic violence/elder abuse resources)
- Reduce my exposure to toxins, like carbon monoxide or tobacco smoke, radon, and asbestos
- Get rid of clutter (If you are hoarding, there are services that can help)
- Deal with any pests in my home, like roaches or bedbugs
- Think of things I might do, like buying a plant, painting, or adding some art
- Change things that impact my senses of sight, smell, touch, or sound
- Do home repairs, or have my landlord do them
- Spend time outdoors as I am able (Spending time in nature increases life span)
- Change my environment by moving
- Have conversations with others who may be impacting my living space
- Other

Ideas for improving your work environment. I could possibly:

- Reduce what I do, repeatedly, that may result in injury
- Improve my ergonomics
- Take breaks at work. Take vacations too.
- Improve my opportunities for employment if unemployed or dissatisfied with my job
- Reduce my exposure to anything harmful at work – loud noises, chemicals, dust, etc.
- Change things that impact my senses of sight, smell, touch, or sound
- Get rid of clutter and organize my spaces
- Be aware of health issues with my work, like pain or fatigue, and ask my healthcare team for support
- Other

Ideas for improving my emotional surroundings. I could possibly:

- Deal differently with any emotional violence I am experiencing
- Consider getting a pet (See if your VA offers animal-assisted therapy)
- Reduce how much media (TV, magazines, newspapers, radio) I am exposed to. Take a break from news for a few days.
- Address some issues I'm having with my boss or co-workers
- Other

What is the one thing I can change so my surroundings help my physical, mental, and emotional health the most? How do you plan to accomplish this change?

## FAMILY, FRIENDS & COWORKERS

Social support has three dimensions

Source of support

- Where is the support coming from (family, friends, programs in the community)?

Satisfaction with support.

- It is important to consider how satisfied you are with a given source of support. Not all social contact is supportive. Relationships can also lead to negative health outcomes. It is important to keep in mind that social support is in the eye of the recipient; if you are not satisfied with a source of support, you are not likely to receive health benefits.

Type of support

- Emotional support – receiving empathy, caring, love, trust, concern, and listening.
- Instrumental support – help in the form of time, labor, money, and direct help.
- Appraisal support – affirmation, evaluation, and feedback.
- Informational support – receiving advice, guidance, suggestions, and information that can help her/him cope.

Why do you want to enhance your relationships (circle of support)?

- Reduce my stress?
- Reduce my anxiety?
- Feel better about myself and my relationships?
- Be more connected with family and friends?
- Improve my health?

What are your reasons?

Strengthening your connections

- Determine who really matters to you.
- Take time to call or visit people you care about.
- Join a support class or group.
- Join a social media group.
- Volunteer
- Attend a social event outside your home (movies, sports, theater, activity club).
- Build your communication skills.

What can you do?

**HEALTHY CHOICES:** Keeping in mind the following areas covered today:

Surroundings: Physical & Emotional – Feeling safe. Having comfortable, healthy spaces where you work and live. The quality of the lighting, color, air & water. Decreasing unpleasant clutter, noises & smells.

- and -

Family, Friends & Coworkers: Relationships – Feeling listened to and connected to people you love and care about. The quality of your communication with family, friends & people you work with.

Which area will you choose to explore this week:

What could you do this week to start making improvements in this area?

How do you feel working on this improvement will impact your health in a positive way?

## SPIRIT & SOUL

What is Spirituality? Spirituality means something different to everyone. For some, it is about participating in organized religion; going to church, synagogue, mosque and so on. For others, it is more personal – some people get in touch with their spiritual side through private prayer, yoga, meditation, quiet reflection or even long walks. Research shows that even skeptics of spirituality cannot stifle the sense that there is something greater than the concrete world we see.

### Types of Spirituality

- Religious: closeness and connection to the sacred as described by a specific religion. It fosters a sense of closeness to a particular Higher Power.
- Humanistic: closeness and connection to humankind. It may involve feelings of love, reflection, service, and altruism.
- Nature: closeness and connection to nature or the environment, such as the wonder one feels when walking in the woods or watching a sunrise.
- Experiential: shaped by personal life events; it is influenced by our individual stories.
- Cosmos: closeness and connection to the whole of creation. It can arise when one contemplates the magnificence of creation or the vastness of the universe.
- Mysterious: there is much that we simply cannot know or understand; it is not possible to fully grasp or know all the answers and it is necessary to allow space for the unknowable.

### Why is spirituality important?

Many spiritual traditions have a long history of using contemplative practices to increase compassion, empathy, attention and to quiet the mind. Contemplative practices are activities that guide you to direct your attention to a specific focus – often an inward-looking reflection or concentration on a specific sensation or concept.

### Meditation can:

- Induce feelings of calm and clear-headedness as well as
- Improve concentration and attention
- Reduce the sensitivity to pain, enhance the immune system, help regulate difficult emotions & relieve stress.
- Mindfulness meditation in particular has proven helpful for people with depression & anxiety, cancer, fibromyalgia, chronic pain, rheumatoid arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, chronic fatigue syndrome & cardiovascular disease.

### Prayer may:

- Elicit the relaxation response
- Elicit feelings of hope, gratitude, and compassion all of which have a positive effect on overall wellbeing.

SESSION 5

Yoga:

- A centuries-old practice helps to create a sense of union within the practitioner through
  - physical postures,
  - ethical behaviors,
  - and breath expansion.
- Yoga has been found to
  - reduce inflammation and stress
  - decrease depression and anxiety
  - lower blood pressure
  - increase feelings of wellbeing.

Journaling is an often-overlooked contemplative practice that:

- Can help you become more aware of your inner life
- Feel more connected to your experience and the world around you.
- Studies show that writing during challenging times may help you find meaning in life's challenges and become more resilient in the face of obstacles.

Additional benefits associated with spirituality include:

- A spiritual community can improve your life.
- Spiritual strength can help you overcome hardships in your life.
- Spiritual people make healthier choices.
- Spirituality may help you live longer.
- Forgiveness is good medicine.

What does Spirit and Soul mean to you?

Are there any areas you have considered exploring?

Consider the following as ways to enhance your life or health through spirituality:

- Meditation
- Visit a prayer group
- Visit a church
- Participate in a 12-step (like) program
- Spend time in nature
- Practice gratitude and/or forgiveness
- Other:

What way(s) might you consider enhancing your spirituality?

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

*“You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.” —Henry David Thoreau*

*“The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Personal development covers activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital, and facilitate employability, enhance the quality of life, and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. When considering how to enhance your health through personal development, look at adding “doing” enhancements (*things you do*) and “being” enhancements (*who you are*). It might be important to find personal development enhancements that support your Mission, Aspirations & Purpose as well as any goals you have set for yourself.

What “Doing” enhancement(s) might you consider and how do you envision adding a “Doing” enhancement will benefit your health?

- Continue to learn new things throughout your life
- Balance career goals and work with your other interests
- Align your career with what really matters to you
- Do random acts of kindness
- Pick-up a hobby that you’ve always wanted to do
- Volunteer work that supports your Mission, Aspirations & Purpose
- Do things that you feel excited about or energized by
- Set limits on what you expect to get “done” in life
- Find a way to get more “relaxation” time into your life
- Join a group of people with like-minded interests
- Make a financial plan to improve your financial stability
- Other

What “Being” enhancement(s) might you consider and how do you envision adding a “Being” enhancement will benefit your health?

- Add activities, practices or relationships that contribute to your happiness
- Change your thinking or perspectives on life to be more optimistic
- Adapt a more forgiving and accepting attitude towards others
- Be more grateful for your life and what you have accomplished
- Work on not letting “bad things” that happen in your life get you down
- Add more laughter and humor into your life
- Be more social
- Learn to live with less
- Other

**HEALTHY CHOICES:** Keeping in mind the following areas covered today:

Spirit & Soul: Growing & Connecting – Having a sense of purpose and meaning in your life. Feeling connected to something larger than yourself. Finding strength in challenging times.

- and -

Personal Development: Personal & Work Life – Learning and growing. Developing abilities and talents. Balancing responsibilities where you live, volunteer & work.

Which area will you choose to explore this week:

What could you do this week to start making improvements in this area?

How do you feel working on this improvement will impact your health in a positive way?



## SMART GOALS & ACTION STEPS

### SMART Goal & Action Step Criteria

- Specific – clear & concise
- Measurable – straightforward way of knowing if the goal has been met
- Action Oriented – action that you are in direct control of
- Realistic – based on what is possible -or- what the you think you can do
- Timed – contains a time line for steps along the way to the final goal

Action Steps are the steps that help you work toward your goal that can:

- Be done in the following week or two, and
- Meet the SMART criteria.

Action steps can be planned out over time or made after the first week's actions steps are attempted.

BARRIERS are circumstances or obstacles that keep people or things apart, prevents communication or impedes progress.

- Something material that blocks or is intended to block passage
- A natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action
- Something immaterial that impedes or separates

There are three types of barriers to consider:

- Internal barriers: something within you that prevents you from reaching your goal. *Examples include:* personality, personal beliefs, lack of knowledge, lack of skill
- External barriers: something in your environment that prevents you from reaching your goal. *Examples include* resources, the weather, your job
- Interpersonal barriers: relates to our roles and responsibilities to our family, work, friends and community and their burden on our time and resources

ACCOUNTABILITY is best described as being required to give an account or having the obligation to report, explain or justify something.

- If you want to be accountable to yourself
  - What will that look like?
  - Will you keep a record of your progress?
  - Will you post your progress on social media or a blog page?
- The following are some ideas.
  - Be in the right mindset: You should know your why...
  - Make the habit a priority: The most effective way to turn your goal into a habit is to plan ahead.
  - Educate yourself on your goal

SMART GOAL & ACTION STEPS:    AREA OF FOCUS:

SMART Goal & Action Step Criteria

- Specific – clear & concise
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- Timed – contains a time line for steps along the way to the final goal

Goal:

Action Steps are the steps that help you work toward your goal that can:

- be done in the following week or two, and
- meet the SMART criteria.

Action Steps:

Barriers:

Overcoming Barriers:

Accountability:

On a scale of 1 (lowest) – 10 (highest)

How important is this goal to your health and wellbeing?

How confident are you that you will achieve this goal?

## BECOMING A PARTNER WITH YOUR CLINICIAN

How can I become a partner with my clinician?

Clinicians have the medical knowledge; you have a wealth of information about yourself. Finding a way to share this information with each other can make for a very power team. If you don't already have a primary care physician, find one that you feel comfortable with.

What information should I share with my clinician?

- When seeing your clinician, be as clear as you can about the reason for your visit.
  - What questions do you want answered?
  - What concerns do you have?
- If you have a symptom that concerns you, jot down the details to share with your clinician.
  - When did the symptom start?
  - Do you have it all the time?
  - How much does it bother you?
  - What makes it better or worse?
  - If the symptom is pain, what does it feel like?
  - How have you tried to relieve the symptom?
- Share family medical history
- Be honest
- Tell your clinician about anything important going on in your life. Something that causes emotional stress in your life could show up as a physical ailment.
  - Ask if your health condition could be related to the event.
  - Be able to answer these questions:
    - Do you often feel over-whelmed by your responsibilities?
    - Are you having relationship problems or going through a divorce?
    - Are you worried about your child?
    - Are you having difficult related to your work?
    - Are you unemployed or having financial problems?
    - Are you a caregiver for an elderly relative?
    - Has anyone close to you died or have you had a different type of loss?

I sometimes hesitate to ask all my questions because my clinician is so busy. What should I do?

- Being organized will help you handle make the best use of your time together.
- Clinics schedule different lengths appointments based on the reason for the appointment. If you have concerns, ask for a longer appointment time.
- At your appointment, address your most pressing concerns first. Schedule another appointment if necessary.

What else can I do to partner with my clinician?

- Do your part. Do not wait until you feel sick or have a symptom. Take an active role in your health care now.
- Schedule regular appointments for check-ups and screening tests.
- Take an honest look at your lifestyle habits (e.g. patterns of eating, drinking, sleeping, smoking, and exercising). Choose a way to improve one or more of these habits.
- Set reasonable goals so that you can be encouraged by your success.
- Consider filling out a Personal Health Plan with your clinician.

What changes can you make to become a better partner with your Clinician / Care Team?

## COMPLEMENTARY & INTEGRATIVE HEALTH

Many Americans, nearly 40 percent, use health care approaches developed outside of mainstream Western, or conventional, medicine for specific conditions or overall well-being.

"Complementary" generally refers to using a non-mainstream approach together with conventional medicine."

"Integrative" refers to the entire spectrum of health care.

Most people use non-mainstream approaches along with conventional treatments. The boundaries between complementary and conventional medicine overlap and have changed with time. For example, guided imagery and massage, both once considered complementary or alternative, are used regularly in some hospitals to help with pain management.

### **Examples of Complementary and Integrative Health**

Acupuncture is a technique in which practitioners stimulate specific points on the body—most often by sticking thin needles through the skin.

Massage therapy includes many different techniques in which practitioners manually caress the soft tissues of the body.

Most meditation techniques, such as mindfulness meditation or transcendental meditation, involve ways in which a person learns to focus attention.

Movement therapies include a broad range of Eastern and Western movement-based approaches; examples include Feldenkrais method, Alexander technique, Pilates, Rolfing Structural Integration, and Trager psychophysical integration.

Relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation, are designed to produce the body's natural relaxation response.

Health care professionals such as chiropractors, osteopathic physicians, naturopathic physicians, physical therapists, and some medical doctors' practice spinal manipulation. Practitioners perform spinal manipulation by using their hands or a device to apply a controlled force to a joint of the spine. The amount of force applied depends on the form used.

Tai chi and qi gong are practices from traditional Chinese medicine that combine specific movements or postures, coordinated breathing, and mental focus.

The various styles of yoga used for health purposes typically combine physical postures or movement, breathing techniques, and meditation.

## LOOKING BACK

- What surprised you most about the work you have done in this group?
- What did you learn about yourself?

## PLANNING AHEAD

- How will you apply this learning to future situations and experiences?
- What are your plans for continuing this work after today?
- What might be some next steps to try, knowing that our group is done after today's session?
- Are there additional SMART health goals that would better help you to live consistently with your values and mission?
- How will you help yourself be accountable without these weekly group meetings?
- What are some of the main achievements that you're proud of, that helped move you towards a healthier physical, mental, and emotional state.

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