



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Introduction to the 8 dimensions of wellness

What Exactly is Wellness?

In the United States, wellness is used in various ways, sometimes to describe physical or mental health. However, wellness is a combination of balance in a person's life that supports a healthy lifestyle and healthy habits in all areas of life. As early as 1947, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified wellness as "physical, mental and social wellbeing, not merely the absence of disease". Understanding the 8 dimensions of wellness and how they act to counterbalance one another can assist with attaining wellness. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identifies the 8 dimensions of wellness as physical, emotional, social, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, environmental, and financial. Balancing the dimensions might not always be possible but being aware of them and how they interrelate could greatly contribute to overall wellness.

Taking small steps toward each wellness area will make them more achievable and less overwhelming. To create physical wellness, recognize the need for physical activity, quality sleep, and a nutrient-dense diet. Rather than tackling all three of these areas at once, try to get more physical activity and add nutritious food and sleep. Concentrating on one item at a time can be less overwhelming and make it easier to achieve goals. Emotional health needs to be attended to when things are not quite right and maintained when things are going well. Recognize personal strengths and use them for positive reinforcement of emotional health. Social interaction will assist you in maintaining wellness, to do this keep in contact and socialize with a supportive family, and friends. Join a club, social group, or volunteer to be connected for social interaction. When practicing wellness, occupational satisfaction and enrichment from work, volunteerism or hobbies will create a sense of fulfillment. Find something you love to do for occupational wellness and self-gratitude. People generally know their intellectual abilities, expand on that, and learn new things to feel engaged. Reading or participating in an activity that expands your mind can develop your intellect. Take time for spiritual practices and connections too. This may include religion, meditation, yoga, or another activity that supports a spiritual connection. Environmental wellness can mean the environment itself but that is very overreaching and hard to control.

Conversely, our direct environment is something we can control therefore think of personal surroundings and organize your spaces by reducing clutter. Financial wellness means finding a sense of satisfaction from not only your current finances but future finances, to do this create a budget and set financial goals. The 8 dimensions of wellness are a framework for achieving personal satisfaction and overall wellness and being aware of them can set you on a path to being well!

Contributed by: Christine Zellers, Assistant Professor/Educator Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cape May County, Department of Family and Community Health Sciences

Programs that Support the Dimensions of Wellness

Virginia Cooperative Extension offers many programs that may be of interest to actively aging adults. Here are some examples. Call your local Extension Office to see if a program is being offered in your area

(<https://ext.vt.edu/offices.html>) Older Adult Programs

LIFT (Life Improvement through Fitness Together)- a strength, flexibility, balance, and nutrition program for a 65+ audience.

Programs to manage or prevent disease:

- Balanced Living with Diabetes- a fourteen-week lifestyle management program for people with diabetes
- Chronic Disease Self-Management Program- a six-week program that teaches participants tools to use to help manage their chronic conditions.
- Diabetes Prevention Program- a 22-session program taught by a trained lifestyle coach for people at risk of developing diabetes.

Collards with Pineapple & Ginger

Adapted from Appetite for Reduction by Isa Chandra Moskowitz

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 bunch (about 10 ounces or 6 cups) collard greens, thick stems removed, leaves sliced in thin, 1/8-inch strips
- ¼ tsp salt
- Tbsp minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp minced ginger
- ¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- ½ cup pineapple tidbits in 100% juice

Instructions:

1. Heat 1 Tbsp oil over medium heat in a large skillet with tight-fitting lid. Add collards and salt. Toss to coat with oil. Cook stirring until greens begin to wilt, about 4 minutes.
2. Clear a space in the center of the pan. Add 1 tsp oil and let it heat for 30 seconds. Add the ginger, garlic, and red pepper. Cook the spices in the oil for 30 seconds to 1 minute.
3. Add pineapple with juice. Stir to combine. Cover. Bring to a simmer and reduce heat to medium-low. Cook 15 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Add water a few tablespoons at a time if the pan becomes dry.
4. Serve immediately. Place leftovers in an air-tight container. Refrigerate and use within 3 days.

Exercise: Wide Leg Squat

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair, knees bent and feet flat on floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. With your hands crossed over your chest, keep your back and shoulders straight throughout the exercise. Breathe in.
3. Breathe out and bring your upper body forward. Extend your crossed arms so they are parallel to the floor and slowly stand up while you breathe in.
4. Breathe out as you slowly sit down. Repeat 10 times.
5. Rest for 15 seconds, and repeat.

Resources

SAMSHA 8 Dimensions of Wellness Video:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDzQdRvLafM

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