
Quality Wellbeing Through A Balanced Lifestyle - A Focus On Making It Happen

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Participants of this program will understand how wellbeing is attained and maintained through a balanced lifestyle. They will explore various strategies that can be used personally or with their clients.

Stephen Covey talks about “Effective Living.” In his book, *The 7 habits of Highly Effective People*.¹ This presenter adopted a few of those habits and has added several other positive habits that lead to a lifestyle of quality wellbeing.

J. Melvin Witmer, Jane Myers and Tom Sweeney talk about “Dimensions of Healthy Functioning.” In their *Wheel of Wellness*², they mention sixteen “dimensions” that look at the person as a whole. In the paragraphs that follow, we will incorporate several of those dimensions into our areas of focus toward quality wellbeing along with an implementation strategy to make it happen.

The focus of this program is multi-dimensional, encompassing physical, mental, spiritual, social, financial, professional, family life, civic involvement, and personal aspects of wellbeing to be considered.

Interwoven throughout the program, in order to capture these nine areas of life, will be the following twelve “work engine topics” related to making

the healthy lifestyle happen: (1) healthy lifestyle; (2) self assessment; (3) commitment; (4) decision making; (5) focus on building strengths; (6) motivation; (7) problem solving; (8) organization; (9) time; (10) support; (11) change and (12) action.

Healthy Lifestyle

A client's lifestyle is the way that client lives, their 'style' of life, a collection of the habits they have chosen to follow for their life. Acquiring a healthy lifestyle is important if quality and length of life is a priority. Consequently, providing a client with information about what a healthy lifestyle means might be among the first things to be explored. Clients need to understand that there are certain lifestyles that are more conducive to a healthy life than are others. A balanced lifestyle requires constant self-assessment and continuous re-evaluation of one's life until it becomes a part of one's regular daily routine.

Self Assessment

Counselor and counselee need to be for real!!

We are each obligated to take responsibility for our own reality. One way to keep in touch with what is really going on in our own lives is to do

periodic self assessments that are based on the “here-and-now” and that are brutally honest and as truthful and as straightforward as we can possibly make it. It is a good idea for clients to make a written assessment of where they think they stands in each of the nine multi-dimensional areas previously mentioned and to compare it to where they wants to be in each area. To look at all nine areas can be done in a few hours, but then to begin working on finding an appropriate balance in each area might take place over a period of several days, weeks, or maybe even months and is continued periodically throughout life. Periodically throughout life a clients will pose questions such as: How am I doing with my diet or exercise program? Am I beginning to neglect my family? What can I do to improve my financial situation?

Commitment

Commitment is going to be required of clients seriously considering developing a balanced lifestyle. Commitment is almost like a promise. If a client is committed to something, she/he will very likely follow through on it. They will find a way to do it. It’s a priority.

Commitment has been described in many ways. The following ideas about commitment will be discussed in the program:

- A promise to follow through.
- It becomes a priority. Resources are made available, time, money, and energy.
- Mentally prepared to take it on.
- It's pretty much a done deal; you only now have to simply follow through with the activities.
- You have a good idea of what the end result looks like.
- You are able to "think" in terms of the thing committed to "is done."
- Inactivity is not an option.
- Positive planning and thinking takes place.
- Roadblocks and other challenges are taken on; they are met heads on.

Decision Making

Decision making is a tool for meeting goals, a process by which decisions are made from the time the thought is first created to the time it is carried out and everything in between. Participants will explore different decision making processes. A decision is born from a need, a desire, a request, and/or a circumstance. Whatever its origin, having to make a decision is an active process.

Some decisions result from indecision, which happens when a client fails to decide and is left with the result of that indecision. The consequences of that indecision can be followed, ignored, partially followed and in some

cases, completely forgotten. Meaningful decisions should be specifically stated in behavioral terms where they can be objectively assessed as to whether they were completed or not.

Focus on Building Strengths

Helping a client to focus on his/her strengths can be helpful in situations such as making it through challenges, taking on challenges and developing sufficiently to meet a particular challenge. One does not usually build strengths by continuing the status quo. Building strengths is moving from one's present position to a stronger one. To be focused is to concentrate one's attention to a narrow area of interest (i.e. to "give attention to" your diet, become more clear about your financial status, strive toward a stronger spiritual life). To focus on building strength implies that there exists some level of competence or strength and that one is not starting from zero (i.e., you already take walks almost daily). Think positive. How can what is already a plus be made to be even stronger? How can good be made to be better or How can you move mediocre up the chain toward excellence? Or, how can a skill in one area be transferred to another?

Motivation

Participants in the program will look at their own motivation in general as well as it relates to the topic at hand. They will use the following as points for discussion:

- Moving into a mode of action.
- Being excited about doing something.
- Being motivated is being ready.
- Being committed to take on the challenge.
- Having a positive frame of mind toward a certain activity or project.
- Having the desire and/or wanting something to happen and being ready to start.

The necessary elements of a decision are sufficiently present or put together that a client is willing and desirous to move forward on a certain task.

Problem Solving

A few problem solving models will be shared. The literature is replete with numerous strategies to solve problems. Participants will discuss why some experts say that problems and barriers are opportunities to grow. Problems and obstacles are hurdles that strengthen us (and our self-esteem) each time we overcome one. Our response to adversity is critical to our own continuous growth.

Organization

Organization is primarily a tool of efficiency. Participants will discuss different strategies of organization and their value. Participants will discuss how and why being organized saves time and money, holds down frustration and provides needed structure for effective and efficient action. Organization is critical for a balanced lifestyle. On the other hand, chaos or non-organization breeds confusion. To be organized helps clients to focus. Organization helps the mind to better see how to proceed.

Clients need to understand that to be organized is to be prepared. Organization entails putting things in a logical order to simplify or to make it conveniently arranged. Organization will keep clients from being overwhelmed with trying to balance all areas of their lives at once.

Time

Time is one of the most precious items in a person's life. Once it's gone, it's gone forever. It cannot be recaptured. It is something that's divided equally among everyone. Participants will learn different ways of looking at time and explore ways of "making" time (i.e., turn off TV or computer, get up earlier, use lunch period, set aside one day a week, identify a

particular hour that's best for certain activities).

Time is a measure of priority, a measure of importance. The amount of time a client spends on something indicates its level of priority or importance to that client. Clients need to understand that it's never too late to start improving their lives. The quality of a client's life will only get better the more balanced it becomes. So the question becomes, how important is it to the client to commit to having a balanced life?

Support

"Use me (and your other support systems) effectively and together we can make it happen." That is what a counselor might say to a client. When support is given proper respect it can be a very powerful tool toward success. With the right support, a client's chances of success are increased tremendously. Participants will learn the value of support and the role it can play in helping clients to develop a balanced lifestyle.

Change

If a client is going to work toward having a balanced lifestyle, it is going to require change. Change is one of the most difficult yet predictive things

one will ever encounter. As hard as it is to do, one can count on it

happening. Change tends to be less difficult when it is less stressful. It is less stressful when it is done in smaller increments. Change is also less difficult when we can “fit it in” with our normal routine or when it can become a part of something we normally do.

A difficult concept to get across to clients sometimes is even though change is inevitable, it is also contrary to human nature to make change happen. The human body and psyche are designed to maintain their current state of being. Consequently, extraordinary conditions are usually required to make change happen. In other words, our natural system has a tendency to stay the same. In order to make change happen, clients must “override” their natural tendency to maintain the status quo.

Several Ideas People Use to Make Change Happen

Participants in the program will investigate several of these ideas for making change happen.

(1) Be inspired by someone or something (speech, movie, book, song, article in magazine, newspaper (see or hear (about) someone else

doing it and believe that you can do it too.)

(2) Take advantage of forced change - (e.g. You've been laid off from your job.)

(3) Take advantage of a death or some other mishap or bad news. Certain difficult to take situations can oftentimes provide the necessary motivation to get one to act.

(4) Just tired of putting off exercising.

(5) Just do it!

(6) Plan it.

(7) Paying someone to help you.

(8) Finding yourself doing it (by accident)-decide to continue (e.g. ran 2 miles instead of 1).

(9) Circumstances change making it easier, more necessary (e.g. sick-lost weight).

(10) Forcing yourself into changing by setting up circumstances where you have to do it.

Action

“Just do it!”

The final step in this process will be “to act or not to act.” However there are numerous reasons why some clients never even reach the action stage. A few such reasons might include fear of failure, uncertainty, afraid to risk, lack of self-confidence, lack of reliable information, lack of faith, or simply not being ready to take that step.

Quality wellbeing is a reasonable goal for most people, including counselors and counselor educators. This program is dedicated to offering a strategy for the average person to make it happen for themselves or to show a client how to obtain a quality lifestyle of wellbeing.

References

1. – Covey, S.R., (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York: Simon & Schuster

2 – Witmer, J.M., Sweeney, T.J., & Myers, J.E. (1998). *The Wheel of Wellness*. Greensboro, NC: Authors

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