

Daily Union

Saturday, June 18, 2016

Wake Up to Wellness – Part 3 of 3 in a series

This article wraps up a 3-part series on wellness – a concept that is often thought of in relation to only physical activity and healthy eating. However, it is so much more than that. In addition to these two areas, which fall under the realm of physical health, there are seven other areas that make up the broader concept of “wellness.” The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, identifies the following 8 dimensions of wellness: Emotional, Environmental, Financial, Intellectual, Occupational, Physical, Social, and Spiritual.

In this final installment of information, there are three areas of wellness emphasized followed by an overview of how all eight dimensions impact our lives every day.

**Environmental Wellness** is defined as “good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being. Environmental wellness is driven by one’s ability to be safe and feel safe in their surroundings. It can include such things as access to clean air, food, and water; preserving the areas where we live, work, and learn; occupying pleasant and positive environments that support our well-being, and promote learning, relaxation, and contemplation in the environment in which we work and live.

**Emotional Wellness** is described as coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships. A person who is emotionally well has the ability to express their feelings in constructive ways, adjust to emotional challenges, use coping skills to handle life’s many stressors, and simply enjoy life. They have the resources needed to ensure they engage in positive self-care. Some of the actions people can take to help ensure emotional wellness could include journaling, establishing and maintaining daily routines, eating meals without distractions (such as their phone or a TV), being intentional in seeing the positive side of situations, understand their stress “buttons” and work to minimize their exposure to those conditions.

**Occupational Wellness** is the personal satisfaction and enrichment a person achieves through their work. We can gain significant inner strength when we work in a setting that we can find meaning and purpose. When our work reflects our personal values, interests, and beliefs, we can achieve occupational wellness.

It is important to recognize the inner-connectedness of the 8 dimensions of wellness. When we are stressed about money (financial), for example, it can affect our health (physical), we may feel anxiety rise out of our situation (emotional) and result in poor work productivity (occupational.) As our level of wellness declines, we may struggle to identify with our purpose and meaning (spiritual wellness.) Perhaps we get fired, or laid off, due to this negative trend we are experiencing and lose the interactions and friendships of some of our former co-workers (social.) We may not be able to afford some of the necessities in life that keep us healthy and cared for (physical) which may result in requiring us to move to a more affordable place to live that may feel less safe and secure (environmental.)

How can each of us contribute to our personal wellness and the wellness of our community as a whole? The first step is to identify, recognize, and accept our current state of wellness. For many, the 8 dimensions of wellness are something we take for granted because we may know little of being out of balance. For others, it may be clear that there is one or more dimensions of wellness that we need to work on. Wellness begins at the personal level, but has a dramatic effect on our community as a whole. Thanks to a grant the Geary Health Department received, data was collected through the Community Health Assessment to help us get a better understanding of how Geary County is faring in the way of wellness. Under the directions of Patricia Hunter, in collaboration with a wide variety of agencies across the county, our community members and the environments in which they live and work were closely observed.

It is from that lengthy and thorough process that Live Well Geary County emerged with the mission of “inspiring and advancing policy, systems and environmental changes that make it easier for Geary County, Kansas residents to lead healthy lives.”

In my role as a team member with Live Well Geary County (LWGC), I have the opportunity to help improve the level of wellness in our community and county through education, volunteer recruitment, training, and so much more.

Live Well Geary County was founded in response to a call for county-wide coordinated action among health and wellness stakeholders for the purpose of closing the gaps in services and resources that help promote the 8 dimensions of wellness. If you are interested in learning more about LWGC, or want to get involved in this non-profit grass-roots movement for wellness, contact the executive board team members at [livewellgearycounty@gmail.com](mailto:livewellgearycounty@gmail.com) or visit their website at <http://www.livewellgearycounty.org>. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!

