

# Holistic Health

## The whole you

Holistic health can be defined as an approach to life. Rather than focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, this approach to health considers the whole person and how they interact with their environment.

Holistic health emphasises the connection of mind, body and spirit. The goal is to achieve wellness where everything is functioning at the highest level possible. The concept of holistic health encourages people to accept responsibility for their own level of wellbeing, and everyday choices that affect their health.



Health is often confused with weight loss. Looking slim or athletic is not an indication that a person is in good physical condition - health is more than just your outward appearance. You might look healthy on the outside, but are you really balanced and well? It's important to not focus on your outward appearance, but to really learn how to achieve optimum 'holistic' wellness from the inside.

So, how do we apply a true holistic approach to our wellbeing?

There is no doubt that most of us are doing the best we can. For example, we commit to exercising regularly and eating well in order to care for our bodies. Yet we can neglect the health and wellbeing of our minds when we struggle to relax and allow the body time to restore, leading to our cortisol (stress) levels running high.

How many of us submerge ourselves in work or a passion, enjoying the creativity and sense of purpose it gifts our spirit, only to often work long, late hours and compromise our basic need for enough sleep?

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## The complete wellness plan

Wellbeing is made up of physical health, emotional nurture, mental stimulation, social interaction, occupational focus and spiritual nourishment. Therefore, in order to feel at our very best, we need a complete approach that meets our needs in each of these areas.

The best way to start a holistic self care path is to think about the different dimensions in your life and how the interconnectedness of each dimension contributes to healthy living. Then chose one activity that will serve you in that area, in the most enjoyable and meaningful way to you.

### *Physical wellness*

means having the strength, flexibility and energy needed for daily activities at home, work and play without getting too tired or worn out. It also means engaging in healthy behaviours (such as being active every day, getting enough sleep, and eating a balanced diet) and avoiding or limiting unhealthy behaviours (like smoking and drinking). Perhaps make a commitment to exercise more regularly, take a walk or get more sleep.

### *Emotional wellness*

is about feeling good about one's self, being able to recognise, accept, understand and constructively share feelings (including love, hope, sadness, fear and anger) and having the skills to cope with the challenges that life brings. Make time to catch up with friends once a week.

### *Intellectual wellness*

is about being curious and committed to life long learning. It's about actively seeking out new ideas and experiences and gaining new skills and knowledge. Taking breaks and breathers from work can give a huge mental boost and increase productivity.

### *Spiritual wellness*

is the ability to find peace and harmony, to live in ways which reflect one's values and find purpose and meaning in life. It includes gratitude, hope, forgiveness and tolerance that comes from a connection with self, others, nature, or more.

### *Occupational wellness*

refers to achieving personal fulfilment through meaningful daily activity, including paid and unpaid work, parenting, caregiving and homemaking and volunteer activities.

### *Social wellness*

Is the ability to develop and maintain positive, respectful and meaningful relationships with others. It is also about giving and receiving support. It includes taking action to make neighbourhoods and communities good places to live.

You might find it easier to choose one thing to start with and commit to that so the practice doesn't overwhelm your current schedule. When you feel able then add another one. You can't run a marathon in one day - this is a life change, not a sprint.

