After going through this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define health; and
- Identify the eight dimensions of wellness and various components of each.

Would you say your current overall health is poor, fair, good, or excellent?

Think about the criteria you use to judge your level of health. Is it based only on your physical health, or do you also think about your emotional health, such as feeling happy, sad, or stressed? What else might be considered?

### Health Defined

**Video Transcript**

Anders: I define healthy as having a balanced diet and getting regular exercise.

Darius: Being healthy. I’m not sick. I’m feeling well all the time.

Anders: Not having diseases or being ill.

Marya Hornbacher: When you look at health magazines, they’re all about diet tips, they’re all about losing weight, they’re all about looking X number of ways. That’s not what health is, that’s not even what a healthy body is. We need to define for ourselves, really what health is going to mean for us.

Dianne Neumark-Sztainer: You know, the first thing that comes to mind is physical health, but we also want to be thinking about our mental health, about our spiritual health, about our social health; we can think about environmental health.

The definition of health reaches beyond what we typically consider to be healthy.

The World Health Organization defines health as, “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing—not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

This definition is the preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization and was adopted in 1946. It lays the foundation for what is now often referred to as wellness or wellbeing, which describes one’s quality of life and ability to live life to its fullest.
Wellness Defined
Video Transcript
Soyei: Wellness is mentally, physically, and emotionally balanced.
Marya Hornbacher: Being balanced means taking care of the body, it means taking care of whatever we call the spirit, it means taking care of the mind. And that has to do with relationships, it has to do with physical health, it has to do with intellectual activity and creative outlets. That's a lot to think about, and it takes an investment of energy, but it is possible.

In this lesson, we outline eight dimensions of wellness that contribute to a healthy lifestyle, including:

- Social
- Physical
- Emotional, or mental
- Career, or occupational
- Intellectual
- Environmental
- Spiritual
- Financial

It’s useful to visualize the various dimensions as spokes on a bicycle wheel. Each spoke represents a different dimension of wellness. However, the stability of the bike as a whole—that’s you—depends on how well each of the spokes is working and whether or not they’re all balanced.

If the spokes are out of balance, the wheel becomes wobbly and leads to a bumpy ride. Bike mechanics use a special tool—aptly called a spoke wrench—to balance the wheel by tweaking the spokes. As the mechanic moves around the wheel, either tightening or loosening certain spokes, the wheel becomes true and then will move smoothly along the road. Similarly, wellness is a balance among many elements or dimensions. Like the need to true a bicycle wheel through adjustments using a special tool, we also can adjust certain aspects of our life that contribute to our overall wellbeing.
Next, we will discuss these eight wellness dimensions and some ways that you might adjust each of them to ride more smoothly throughout life.

That’s not to say you’ll never hit a bump in the road, but the more true your wheel is, the less likely it will be that you’ll fall and be unable to get back up again.

**Physical wellness encompasses the things we do, or don’t do, to keep our bodies healthy.**

The first things that come to mind when we think about taking care of the body are typically eating well and exercising, but physical wellness is more than that. It also includes:

- Getting good sleep and enough of it;
- Avoiding harmful substances, such as tobacco, excess alcohol, other drugs, and environmental pollutants;
- Making responsible decisions about your body and not putting it in harm’s way, for example, wearing a seatbelt and, if sexually active, using protection such as a condom for STI prevention;
- Practicing good personal hygiene; and
- Getting regular medical and dental check-ups.

All of these strategies help improve the body’s ability to perform everyday activities and stay physically healthy, but the physical dimension is not necessarily limited to this list. What other things might help you achieve physical wellness? Take a moment to really think about how you can improve the way that your body feels and functions.

This course will focus on three very important aspects of physical wellness—sleeping, eating well, and exercising—but you will quickly learn how other wellness dimensions greatly impact these three things. For example, intellectual wellness influences our diet and activity through our ability to learn and be open to new things or ideas.
Further, our physical wellness influences the other dimensions of wellness. For example, poor physical health may lead to social isolation, impacting the social and emotional dimensions of wellness.

**Community Resources**
- Campus Health Service
- Campus Fitness Center
- Campus Dining Service

**Intellectual wellness doesn’t refer exclusively to book learning.**
It involves the capacity to question and think critically, which also includes being open to new ideas. Problem solving and reasoning objectively through difficult situations are other aspects of intellectual wellness, as is having the motivation to master new skills—basically, learning new things with a sense of curiosity—and then creatively applying learned information to life. People who have a high degree of intellectual wellness are life-long learners who continuously seek out opportunities to learn new things.

Being a student presents an enormous opportunity to challenge your mind and enhance your intellectual wellness. Here are some suggestions for making the most of it.
- Identify your preferred learning style.
- Read assigned readings.
- Attend and participate in your classes.
- Talk to your instructors and classmates.

Other strategies for improving intellectual wellness include being observant, reading for pleasure, doing word puzzles, pursuing a variety of interests, and getting enough sleep. Notice how sleep is a strategy to enhance the intellectual dimension, even though it’s also part of the physical dimension. You’ll continue to notice as we go on that various aspects of the wellness dimensions overlap.

**Resources**
- Identify your learning style

**Community Resource**
- Campus Academic Support Services
Are you generally happy?
Enjoyment in life—despite ups and downs—is a cornerstone of emotional wellness. Other important elements are developing a positive sense of self-worth, believing in yourself, taking responsibility for yourself, and honoring your personal choices. If you are emotionally well, you have the ability to adjust to change, cope with stress in healthy ways, and not only recognize when you need help but also seek it out.

Emotional wellness encompasses the ability to recognize, accept, and appropriately express a range of emotions. Some people deny themselves the latitude to not only express certain emotions but also to feel them. They don’t know how to listen to their feelings, or they feel guilty for the feelings they have. On the other hand, some people have a tendency to over-feel or over-express emotions. For example, expressing emotions through inappropriate outbursts of exuberance or anger may cause harm to oneself or others. Emotional wellness comes down to an ability to manage emotions appropriately depending on the situation, and then to share those feelings with others. By doing so, you build self-esteem and self-confidence. And, you build trusting relationships with others.

Here are some suggestions for enhancing emotional wellness.

- Appreciate yourself.
- Approach challenges with a positive attitude.
- Make your own choices instead of accepting without question peer pressures related to body image, alcohol consumption, smoking, or other behaviors.
- Be assertive.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or meditation.
- Get help if you need it.
- Forgive yourself for your mistakes; learn from them and move on.

Further, managing your time well, getting adequate rest, being physically active, and eating balanced meals will serve to help prevent and cope with stress.
Emotional wellness is only one aspect of psychosocial health—a composite of social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health components.

How does emotional wellness influence your overall health? For that matter, how do the other wellness dimensions influence your emotional wellness? Consider these questions as we go through the rest of this lesson.

**Community Resources**
- Campus Mental Health Service
- University Counseling & Consulting Services

**Resources**
- Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman:
- Your Perfect Right: Assertiveness and Equality in Your Life and Relationships by Robert Alberti and Michael Emmons
- 90:10: The “Single Most Important Thing You Can Do For Your Stress” (video)

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**Psychosocial Health**

**Video Transcript**

Mercedes: Never feel bad for who you are and where are you coming from.
Anders: As long as you’re putting effort in to whatever you’re doing and you’re happy with yourself, that’s all that matters.
Julia: Learn to listen to your inner voice.
Marya: When we’re paying more attention to what somebody else thinks than how we feel ourselves, we lose balance, you know. If I’m leaning too hard on you, I tip over if you move. If I’m standing strong in my own two feet I’ve got a good balance. When I’m paying too much attention to what somebody else thinks of me, say I’m at a party and I spend the whole time thinking how is this person thinking about me in this conversation, I walk away from that conversation and have no idea what was said. What’s going to make us happy is learning how to be comfortable with ourselves and be in relationships with others. Human relationships are not a vertical structure of power, they’re a web of balanced relationships and when we’re not seeing our place in that, when we’re not seeing our relationship to other people, we give over a sense of ourselves and we lose sight of what we need.

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The essence of spiritual wellness is discovering meaning and purpose in life and determining your guiding values.

Spiritual wellness encompasses all the ways that people come to understand themselves and their place in the universe. For some, this may stem from belief in a particular religion, but one doesn’t have to be religious in order to be spiritual.
Considering your own beliefs and participating in spiritual activities can help you identify and clarify the guiding principles in your life. It may even be helpful to explore a variety of religions and cultures to see what resonates with you. Another important part of spiritual wellness is being true to your beliefs and living in a way that’s consistent with your personal values. Spiritual wellness also involves respecting that other people may have different beliefs. In general, caring for the welfare of others, expressing compassion, and being forgiving are qualities of spiritual wellness, and they enhance emotional wellness as well.

Some strategies for enriching spiritual wellness include:
- Spending time reflecting on life;
- Seeking harmony and unity with the world around you;
- Practicing gratitude and developing a sense of appreciation;
- Praying or meditating;
- Talking with others about your beliefs and theirs’; and perhaps
- Attending religious services.

While achieving and maintaining spiritual wellness is of course a personal journey, it’s also good to develop a sense of belonging and community around your beliefs. Consider this as we move on to the social dimension of wellness.

*Social wellness is related to how people are interconnected.*

Being socially well means creating and maintaining a network of healthy personal relationships with friends, family, co-workers, and classmates who support you and whom you support. It’s not about how big your social network is, but rather the value of the relationships you do have. Further, social wellness involves caring for others and contributing to your community.

Practicing good communication skills is a key aspect of social wellness. Being able to define your boundaries and communicate assertively is important as you constructively express your ideas and opinions while respecting those of others and resolve conflict when it arises. Notice how this relates to the emotional dimension of wellness.

Some strategies for enhancing your social wellness include:
- Spending time with family and friends—by sharing meals together, for example;
• Making an effort to meet new people;
• Getting involved in student groups or other organizations related to your interests;
• Volunteering; and
• Voting for social and political initiatives that are important to you.

People are interdependent not only on each other but also on nature, thus the social dimension also encompasses the environmental dimension of wellness. As we care about ourselves and others, we contribute to the community in meaningful ways. When we work to improve our communities we inevitably impact the environment in which we live.

**Community Resources**
- Campus Student Activities Office or Programs
- Intramurals
- Service-learning Opportunities

**Resources**
- Power of Introverts - TED talk

**Environmental wellness encompasses ways in which environments—whether natural or built—support the health of individuals and communities.**

Sometimes we have to act collectively as a community to improve the environment in order to promote health—by addressing safety hazards to minimize harm, for example. Communities can create environments in which healthy choices are easy choices in a number of different ways, such as:

• Putting seatbelts and airbags in cars to prevent injury during accidents;
• Increasing the availability of farmers markets for people to purchase fresh produce;
• Building sidewalks in new housing developments to promote walking;
• Offering incentives for use of alternative transportation methods, such as mass transit or bicycling; and
• Providing recycling and composting receptacles, which reduces reliance on landfills and other trash disposal methods that harm the environment.

Humans do many things to impact the environment. In fact, all living species alter the environment with their activities. It’s important to recognize your impact and live in environmentally responsible ways. Reducing the number of products and amount of energy you use,

**Health and Wellness**
buying used items when you can, and recycling are just the beginning.

Being aware of and appreciating the natural world around you also means taking advantage of opportunities to connect with nature—by going for a walk, for example—doing things to take care of common spaces, and working to sustain clean air, water, and land.

**Resources**
- 29 Tips to “go green”
- Composting tips
- Center for a New American Dream
- It All Adds Up

**Community Resources:**
- Share The Air
- UMTC Transportation
- Twin Cities Public transportation- Metro Transit
- ReUse Center
- PubH 3001: Personal and Community Health
- PubH 3004: Basic Concepts in Personal and Community Health

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**This is Public Health Video**
Please return to Page 15 of the online lessons to view a short video entitled "This is Public Health."

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**What are some ways your current environment promotes or inhibits health?**
Please return to Page 16 of the online lessons to complete a reflective interaction.

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**Occupational wellness involves having a sense of direction and goals when it comes to your work—whether that’s inside or outside the home, paid or unpaid—and feeling a sense of satisfaction from how you spend your time.**

Some strategies for enhancing occupational wellness are to:

- Consider your purpose in life and the extent to which what you’re doing aligns with that purpose;
- Explore a variety of interests and career options;
- Choose a field of study and career path for which you are well-suited—one in which you’re able to apply your unique talents and strengths;
- Engage yourself in personal and professional development; and
- Establish a healthy work-life balance.
Experiencing occupational wellness involves balancing work and leisure. Do you tend to overcommit or put in long hours? Are you always on, or do you allow time to unwind, be in the moment, and recharge? Managing work-related stress and maintaining an appropriate work-life balance helps prevent burnout. Further, choosing a career path that you find fulfilling and meaningful—one that’s in line with your values and beliefs—will help you achieve occupational wellness.

**Resources**
- MNCareers
- Tool - O-Net Center – Career exploration and job analysis tool
- Informational Interview
- Networking 101, 10-09-2012, Washington Post

**Community Resources:**
- Using Your Strengths (Center for Academic Planning and Exploration)
- UMN Center for Spirituality and Healing: Life Purpose Self-Assessment
- Career Exploration Services
- Career and Internship Services
- CSPH 3211 Living on Purpose: An Exploration of Self, Purpose, and Community

*Finally, we reach the eighth dimension, financial wellness, which we define as a comprehensive understanding of your financial situation, including:*  
- Knowing where your money comes from and where it is going;  
- Living within your means;  
- Aligning your spending with your personal values and priorities;  
- Having a financial plan; and  
- Feeling prepared for financial changes.

It may seem odd to you that this is considered a dimension of wellness, but it makes sense if you think about how the state of one’s finances can impact his emotional, social, physical, and other dimensions of wellness. For example, it can be pretty stressful to have loads of credit card debt.

The following strategies can help enhance financial wellness.  
- Take a course on personal finance to build financial literacy.  
- Track your spending.
• Plan a budget and stick to it.
• Set reasonable priorities and make responsible choices, respecting the difference between necessities and luxuries.
• Use and manage credit appropriately.
• Make informed decisions regarding student loans and other financial aid.
• Seek out opportunities for scholarships and grants.

Take a moment to consider how financial wellness influences your overall health and what you might do to enhance it.

Resources
Budget Calculator
Financial Aid Information
Tool - Scholarship Search Engines

Community Resources
FSoS 1301 Cash or Credit: You Need to Know
FSoS 3101 Personal and Family Finances
Campus Financial Advising Resources
Campus Financial Aid Office
Live Like A Student

Achieving wellness is a complex, active process in which you identify ways to successfully balance many overlapping aspects of your life: physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social, environmental, occupational, and financial. It involves making choices that contribute to living a balanced, high-quality life.

Have any of the dimensions been lacking your attention lately? What can you do now to true your wellness wheel?

Resource
Wellness Self-Assessment Tool

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