

UIC Solutions Suite Webinar Series
Transcript for how-to webinar on Physical Wellness for Work
Recorded by Pat Nemec

Slide 1: (announcer)

Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

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Hello. My name is Pat Nemec. I work with the Wellness Institute at Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey and with the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. The UIC Center offers a Solutions Suite of free health, self-direction, and employment tools for the behavioral health field. You can visit the Solutions Suite on the website where you found this webinar, at www.center4healthandsdc.org. That's w w w DOT center, the number 4, Health, and S-D-C DOT org. The Center and the Solutions Suite are jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Community Living; and by the Center for Mental Health Services of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The contents of this webinar do not necessarily represent the policy of any agency or endorsement by the federal government.

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Today, I'll be describing how to use one of the tools found in our Solutions Suite, *Physical Wellness for Work*. Peggy Swarbrick and her colleagues developed this workbook at Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. This workbook was specially developed for people in recovery who are living with a mental health condition. It can be used a self-guided tool to help you think about how your own wellness affects your ability to get and keep a job. You also might use this booklet when working with a peer or other supporter, or as part of a group. You can use this workbook by itself or with some of our other tools.

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There are several learning objectives for this webinar. You'll learn about the purpose and format of *Physical Wellness for Work*. I will be defining physical wellness. I also will talk about why work is important and how your physical wellness can affect your ability to get and keep a job. Most of this webinar will focus on how you can use this workbook on your own. Later, I also will go over some ways that the workbook can be used in a group.

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Physical Wellness for Work is available for free from our web site. The workbook may be photocopied for your personal use or for use by peer or non-peer, not-for-profit agencies providing mental health and/or substance use services. However, when you copy the workbook, please be sure that the header and footer are visible on each page, so that people using it know where it came from.

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The workbook is set up in sections, with each section focused on one aspect of physical wellness. The workbook is 17 pages long, plus a cover page. The workbook is best printed double-sided, then stapled. The image on the cover is in color, but the workbook can be printed in black and white. Once you print it, it is easy to follow along. You don't need any special knowledge or experience. All you need to get started is a pen or a pencil.

It is also possible to design a group based on this workbook, such as meeting for a few weeks and going through one or two sections each week. In a later section of this webinar, I will share some tips for using this tool in a group.

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The workbook is based on the principle of personal responsibility. At Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey, we define wellness as a conscious, deliberate process that requires being aware of the actions you take and the choices you make. This means that your wellness comes from what you do. Your daily actions, habits, and routines contribute to your physical health and how you feel every day. Developing and maintaining positive physical health habits and routines will help you have the energy you need to get and keep a job.

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As you use this workbook, you will get a better idea of how your physical wellness affects your ability to work. You also will become aware of the different choices you make in a single day, and how these choices affect your physical wellness. Small choices add up, like packing what you need the night before a work day, or eating a healthy breakfast, or setting up a regular relaxing evening routine. Over time, these choices and habits can become healthy habits that affect you for the better in ways that you might not expect.

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One important reason to focus on work is that work provides an income, and contributes to financial wellness. Work also provides a sense of purpose, positive feelings from making a contribution, and a structure for each week. If your job involves working with others in some way, going to work provides social wellness. Many other dimensions of wellness also can be enriched by working, including intellectual wellness. For me, work has provided many benefits beyond just an income. I am hoping that focusing on physical wellness for work will help others enjoy these many benefits.

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Next, I'll walk you through *Physical Wellness for Work*. The workbook starts with information about work and physical wellness and an overview of wellness habits and routines. After that, there are five sections, each focused on one area of physical wellness. These areas are sleep and rest, physical activity, relaxation and stress management, eating well, and medical care and screening. The booklet ends with summary pages where you can keep track of what you are doing now and what you plan to change or improve.

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Each of the sections of the booklet has two pages on one wellness area. The first page describes the wellness area and asks you a few questions about what you are doing now. The second page gives ideas for actions, habits, and routines that will contribute to your physical wellness. At the end of each section, you have a chance to reflect on what you might like to change or improve to help you do well at work. Next, I will give you more information about each section.

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The workbook begins with some information on work and physical wellness. Any job requires concentration and stamina. It doesn't matter if you work full-time or part-time, success at work means showing up consistently and completing your work tasks. If you get sick or you don't sleep well, it's hard to do a good job. You need energy to get up, get out, and get things done. Focusing on physical wellness daily habits can support success in getting and keeping a job.

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Each section of the workbook gives you a chance to reflect on what you do now. For example, the first section asks you how you would describe your physical health and what a typical day is like for you. Some people using this workbook will be working. Others won't be working yet but will be thinking about working. Either way, the workbook includes questions about how many hours you think you could work each day and each week.

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The second section of the workbook talks about habits and routines. A habit is an automatic behavior – something you do without thinking. When you are a worker, it is important to have habits that help you get ready for work, get to work, be productive at your job, and structure your free time to include rest and relaxation. Routines are patterns of habits that provide structure for your day. Creating routines is important to help you when your work is challenging or you need to manage the everyday stresses of being productive.

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Like the later sections on the physical wellness areas, the section on habits and routines has a checklist, so you can reflect on what you are doing now. You read over the checklist and mark all of the items that apply to you. For example, one checklist item is, "I use a nightly routine to prepare me for quality sleep." Another checklist item is, "I can identify habits that make me successful as a worker."

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The section on habits and routines, like the other sections, also includes some ideas for things you might want to do for your physical wellness. For example, one tip is to organize your workday around your natural clock. I have one co-worker who is bright and alert in the morning, so she schedules tasks that require clear thinking in the early part of the work day. Another co-worker doesn't feel fully awake until almost lunch time, so he schedules tasks that require careful attention and thought for right after lunch. Another idea is to use prompts and reminders. For example, I write myself notes and use the alarm function on my phone, so I don't forget things.

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The next few sections of *Physical Wellness for Work* are about specific physical wellness areas, starting with sleep and rest. This section begins with a description of sleep and rest, and points out that most people need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep each night. Maybe you have had a few nights when you didn't sleep well for some reason, so you know how hard it is to manage when you're tired. Being well for work requires getting enough good quality sleep so you can be awake and alert, with enough energy to do the job. This section asks you about your current sleep habits and how much sleep you think you would need to be able to work well the next day.

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The self-reflection checklist in the section on sleep and rest includes several items related to your sleep and rest. For example, do you wake up in the morning feeling rested? Another item is, "My energy level is pretty stable throughout the day." This section also includes ideas for improving your sleep and rest, such as making your room as dark as possible. Other tips include minimizing distractions and trying relaxation techniques before going to sleep.

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The next section focuses on the wellness area of physical activity. Physical activity is any body movement that works your muscles and uses more energy than you use when you're resting. Most jobs require some level of physical activity and all jobs require attention and energy. Your morning routine and the activities you perform on the job are affected by how well you feel physically. In this section, you are asked to describe your typical level of physical activity, list some examples of what you do now, and describe how often you currently exercise each week.

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Just like the other sections, the section on physical activity includes a self-reflection checklist and some tips. The checklist items ask about your balance, strength, energy, and flexibility, which are all aspects of wellness that are affected by physical activity. The list of tips includes ideas such as trying different physical activities to find ones that suit you, then building up gradually. Some experts say that the very best physical activity to do is the one you enjoy!

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The section on relaxation and stress management begins with a description. Stress management includes any technique that can help you cope with or lessen the negative physical and emotional effects of your everyday life pressures. Relaxation is the refreshment of the body and mind, and may include activities that provide entertainment and a diversion from your daily tasks. This workbook section asks how you manage stress now and what activities help you relax.

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The self-reflection checklist on relaxation and stress management includes items like, "I know when to take a break from work tasks or home chores." Other items ask about how you manage in a stressful situation, such as the item, "I can handle criticism well," and about whether you use certain stress management techniques, like humor. The ideas for relaxation and stress management include lots of different options, like keeping a journal, making time for yourself, and using positive thoughts.

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If someone asked you about what it takes to be physically well, you might think of healthy eating. Eating well includes having regular meals with healthy foods, such as lean meats, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products. It also means watching your portion size and trying to reduce or limit the amount of caffeine and sugar-filled drinks. These can make you feel jittery or cause your energy level to spike and then crash. The section of the workbook on eating well asks about things like how much water and caffeine you drink, as well as how often you eat fruit, vegetables, and restaurant meals. The self-reflection checklist items also look at your current habits, such as “I have breakfast most days of the week” and “I rarely eat in the evening.”

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The section on eating well also includes a lot of ideas. For example, bringing a healthy meal to work each day can ensure you get the nutrients you need and also can save you money. Another way to save money and boost your physical wellness is to drink water instead of sugary drinks.

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Medical care and screenings are an important part of staying well. By screenings, I mean preventive tests like mammograms or prostate exams, as well as routine checks on your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. Of course, medical care means taking care of an acute illness like the flu or a broken bone, and of long-term illnesses like asthma or diabetes. But medical care also means getting vaccinations and other preventive treatments, as recommended by your doctor or primary care nurse. The section on medical care and screening includes self-reflection questions and a chart for listing your most recent medical tests or checks. There is a place to list your medications and a checklist with items like, “I have a yearly dental exam” and “I know my family’s medical history.”

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The section on medical care and screenings also includes a list of good ideas. These ideas include preparing for your appointment by listing all of the questions you have. Another idea is to take someone with you to the appointment, if it would help you feel less nervous or help you remember what the doctor says.

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After all of the sections on the different physical wellness areas, the workbook includes two summary pages. The first is for listing your strengths in each of the physical wellness areas. The second page, which is also the last page of the workbook, provides a space to list what you would like to improve or change. There also is space to list all of the supports and resources you need to be successful. Once you are clear about what you want to do, you can take action. Be sure to use other people in your life for support. For example, if you are working with an Employment Specialist, talk over what you want to do to improve your physical wellness for work.

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In the next section of the webinar, I will give you some tips on using this workbook in a group.

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Physical Wellness for Work can be used in a group where people go through it together, with each section of the workbook being completed during a group session on that physical wellness area. For example, you might hold an 8-week group that begins with an overview of physical wellness and a discussion of how physical wellness can affect group members' abilities to get and keep a job. You can then cover habits and routines and the five other physical wellness areas over the next 6 weeks, followed by a wrap-up session at the end. During the group time, members would write in the workbook and, if they choose, share with each other.

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Plenty of time needs to be set aside for discussion about each physical wellness area and to help group members identify their strengths, no matter how small. Examples and instructions for some wellness activities could be added, like practicing some stress management techniques or sharing a healthy lunch that would be easy to pack for work.

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A *Physical Wellness for Work* group can be run as a self-help group, where all of the group members take turns as leaders, or with one or two group leaders who organize and run the group for every session. In general, we recommend using co-leaders, with at least one group leader being a person in recovery from a mental health condition.

Regardless of the group format, the group will need guidelines and ground rules. If there are consistent leaders, the leaders can either set the guidelines ahead of time or develop them with the group. Guidelines should include maintaining confidentiality, the right to decide not to share a particular experience or feeling, and a process that makes time for everyone in the group to participate. Decisions also need to be made about the length of group, such as how long to take for each session, how often the group will get together, and the total length of time the group will meet, whether weeks or months.

If the wellness group will have a consistent group leader or co-leaders, the group leaders should have experience leading groups, but do not need any specific training or certification. In addition, the group leaders should have personal experience using these tools before leading the group.

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Physical Wellness for Work can be used with other tools or to supplement other groups. For example, on the web site for our Solutions Suite, you will find other tools related to physical wellness. If you are running a group using these tools, participants may appreciate having a copy of *Physical Wellness for Work* to think about how what they are learning can help them get and keep a job. Someone might want to use *Physical Wellness for Work* along with the booklet *Seeking Supported Employment*, which helps users apply a structured process to assess whether the vocational program they are attending, or would like to attend, meets the standards of evidence-based supported employment.

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Thank you for your time today. I hope you'll consider using *Physical Wellness for Work* as you work on your own wellness and recovery, or help others with theirs. If you still have questions after participating in this webinar, you can request free technical assistance, which we offer on a time-limited basis. Call us at 312.355.1696 or click on the "free technical assistance" button on the *Physical Wellness for Work* page of our website to learn more.

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Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center's web site.