

Podcast Transcript on Why to use the Wellness Activity Lessons Manual

SO: Hello. My name is Steve Olker. I'm here today to talk with Christina Serrano about a resource that can be used to teach wellness skills and activities. This collection is titled *Wellness Activity Lessons*, and can be found at the UIC Solutions Suite website.

Thanks for joining me today, Christina. Please share with our listeners the purpose of this collection of Wellness Activity lessons and the types of lesson that are included in the manual.

CS: Sure. There are eleven wellness topics covered that were selected based on their interest to anyone looking to improve his or her wellness. Each focuses on adding or changing a simple behavior, habit, or routine. Some examples are yoga, starting a gratitude journal, and eating well. The great part about these lessons is that they were developed to be used by a variety of people. Each lesson plan is scripted to guide the facilitator through an engaging hour-long session.

SO: Does the facilitator need to have experience with group counseling?

CS: Experience running groups is helpful, but may not be necessary. We do suggest that the facilitator have good engagement skills as well as a general understanding of wellness. Of course, the facilitator will need to prepare ahead of time to be familiar with the scripted lessons.

SO: What makes these Wellness Activity Lessons different from other group health and wellness activity manuals?

CS: The great thing about the Wellness Activity Lessons manual is that each hour-long lesson includes scripted guidelines, including how to reinforce the activity and engage members so they all can benefit. The facilitator can select a series of lessons to use in a program, and will be able to follow a lesson plan to prepare for and conduct each session. Since the lessons are designed to be useful, there is a specific focus on practical applications and personal experiences, so the participants can practice the new knowledge and skills after the session.

SO: What are some settings where these groups can be conducted?

CS: We have used the lessons from this manual in a variety of settings, including community wellness centers, wellness respite programs, an inpatient unit, and community mental health centers.

SO: What sorts of materials or supplies do the lessons require?

CS: Most lessons only require some basic supplies like pen, paper, TV or computer, and speakers. Some topics require more preparation. For example, the healthy eating topic suggests a variety of foods to make and share, which requires certain kitchen supplies and groceries.

SO: That sounds great. It's sometimes hard to get people engaged in group activities, so having healthy food can only help. What other activities are used in the lessons to help engage participants?

CS: Each lesson includes a 10-minute icebreaker activity. For example, the lesson on journaling suggests something we call a "gratitude toss." In this activity, participants toss a ball around a circle, and the person with the ball shares something that they are grateful for. Any small thing is fine and it helps participants learn about each other, as well as orienting them to the idea of gratitude journaling.

SO: Can these lessons be used individually, or must they be used in a group setting?

CS: That's a good question. Each lesson is designed for use with a group. This is to foster sharing of content and experiences between participants. We believe this helps in learning the skills and information presented. At times, I have seen some of the activities used in one-to-one sessions, with someone who is familiar with the material helps an individual participant when a group is not available.

SO: You said earlier that a facilitator can pick and choose which lessons to put in a program. Do they have to go in a particular order? Which one is your personal favorite?

CS: The nice thing about this collection is that each lesson can be used independently, although each topic helps contribute towards improving overall wellness. Having the lessons independent from one another is helpful in settings where participants may come and go, like a Wellness Community Center. Some lessons can be used more than once, especially the more popular ones, like yoga, which is my personal favorite. The lessons are not linear in nature, but combining them into a multi-session program provides a holistic approach to wellness.

SO: Excellent! This sounds like an easy to use resource that I could start using with the people who are served at my agency. I'm glad you could take this time to talk with me. Thanks so much.

CS: You're welcome. Please visit the UIC Solutions Suite website for more information, including a detailed webinar on how to implement these wellness activity lessons, and for additional resources about wellness and recovery.