

UIC Solutions Suite Webinar Series

Transcript for how-to webinar on Wellness in 8 Dimensions and Wellness Daily Plan

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.

Slide 2:

Hello. My name is Pat Nemec. I work with Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey and the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Our 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 web site where you found this webinar, at www.center4healthandsdc.org. That's www 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. Contents do not necessarily represent the policy of any agency or endorsement by the federal government.

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Today, I'll be discussing how to use two of the tools found in our Solutions Suite. The first is *Wellness in 8 Dimensions*, which is a booklet that Dr. Peggy Swarbrick developed with Jay Yudof at Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey. *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* is designed as a self-guided tool to help people think about their own wellness. The second tool is the *Wellness Daily Plan*, which Dr. Swarbrick also developed. This plan includes a two-page chart to document your weekly progress in all 8 dimensions. You can use this *Plan* alone or with *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* to keep track of the wellness activities you plan to do in a given week. These self-guided tools were specially developed for people in recovery who are living with a mental health condition.

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There are several learning objectives for this webinar. You'll learn about the purpose and format of the two wellness tools. I also will be defining wellness and describing each of the 8 dimensions. Most of this webinar will focus on how you can use these tools on your own. Later, I also will go over some ways that these tools can be used in a group.

Slide 5:

Our two wellness tools are available for free. They may be photocopied for use by peer or non-peer, not-for-profit agencies providing mental health and/or substance use services. However, when you copy a page, please be sure that the header and footer are visible, so that people using these materials know where they came from.

Slide 6:

The *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* booklet is set up so that you can fill out a worksheet for each dimension, one after the other. The booklet is 28 pages long, and prints out as a half-sheet booklet, folded in the middle. The booklet is best printed double-sided. The 8-dimension diagram is in color, but the booklet 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 the *8 Dimensions* booklet, such as meeting for a few weeks and going through one or two dimensions 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 booklet also emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility. Wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires being aware of the actions you take and the choices you make. So, wellness comes from what you do—from the daily habits and routines that contribute to you feeling well. By attending to all of the wellness dimensions in ways that work for you, you can achieve a satisfying lifestyle and build your happiness and resilience.

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As you read through this booklet, you will get a better idea of all the many choices that you can make in a single day to affect your wellness. Small choices add up, like reaching for water instead of a sugary drink, or taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or calling a friend instead of watching TV alone. Over time, these healthy little choices can become healthy habits that affect your life in many surprising ways.

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Now let's take a look at the *Wellness Daily Plan*. It is five pages long. The first two pages are used for tracking your activities in each of the 8 dimensions. You can use the *Wellness Daily Plan* separately from the *8 Dimensions* booklet, if you wish. You also might want to use it to track your wellness activities even if you do not have a wellness goal or specific action steps to reach your goal. The *Wellness Daily Plan* also includes three pages describing each dimension, along with sample action steps. The *Plan* prints in color, but works fine in black and white. Just print it, and you can get started in listing the things you do each day. While the *Plan* has spaces for only one week, you can make several copies of the two-page plan to track your progress over a longer period of time.

The *Wellness Daily Plan* helps you be accountable to yourself, by keeping track of the things you can do to take care of yourself. By seeing what you are doing for your wellness, you can build your confidence, which also makes it easier to work on adding any new habits and routines that you think might help your wellness and recovery.

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Next, I want to talk about habits and routines. A habit is an automatic behavior—something that you do without thinking. Once you have established a habit, you will find it hard *not* to do it.

Routines are patterns of behavior that occur during your regular day or week. For example, I have a habit of flossing and brushing my teeth every night before bed, as part of my regular evening routine. After doing this for so long, I don't even think about it, I just do it. I can't relax and fall asleep if I haven't taken care of my teeth, because it is such an ingrained habit that has become an important part of my life.

It takes a while to build a new healthy habit, usually somewhere between a couple of months and a year or so, but it's worth the effort to end up being able to do it without thinking! Keeping track of what you are doing with the *Wellness Daily Plan* can help you see your progress. It can be difficult to break an unhealthy habit, since those habits also are automatic. Sometimes, replacing the old habit with something new can work well.

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Since these tools are built around the 8 dimensions of wellness, let's take a look at what each dimension involves.

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The 8 dimensions of wellness are often shown graphically as 8 overlapping circles. This image is designed to show that each dimension affects the other dimensions. For example, when I take my daily walk, which helps my physical and spiritual wellness, I also count my steps to help me feel centered and calm for my emotional wellness. When I wake up each day to go to work, which reflects the occupational dimension, I strengthen my spiritual dimension as well, since there is purpose and meaning in what I do. Additionally, I work together with colleagues and people we serve, so my work also strengthens my social dimension.

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One of the circles is for Physical Wellness, which means keeping your body healthy. You can probably list a lot of things you do, or could do, that are related to physical wellness. Getting the medical and dental care you need is important, including regular health screenings. Staying active, either through exercising or just an active lifestyle, is important in many ways. Eating well and getting good quality sleep are also critical to physical wellness. Stress can have harmful physical effects, especially when the stress occurs over a long period of time, so having healthy ways to manage stress is very useful.

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The circle for Intellectual Wellness refers to challenging your mind, like learning new things, using that knowledge, and sharing what you learn. For many people, reading contributes to their intellectual wellness, whether that involves reading fiction, history, or the daily newspaper. For some people, the newspaper is all about the crossword puzzle or the daily Sudoku, because the mental workout from doing puzzles makes them feel challenged, alert, and relaxed. Of course, if you manage to actually solve the puzzle, that also brings a sense of accomplishment!

Slide 15:

The dimension called Environmental Wellness involves being and feeling physically secure, in safe and clean surroundings, and being able to access clean air, food, and water. Your environmental wellness includes the specific places where you live, work, and play, but also

your larger surroundings. Your environment includes where you are right this minute, as well as your community, country, and the whole planet. Spending time in nature, or in some other place of peaceful beauty, can boost your environmental wellness. Making your environment a nicer place to be helps, too, whether that means cleaning your kitchen, picking up trash in the park, or recycling.

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The dimension for Spiritual Wellness is not the same as belonging to a particular religious faith, although religious practice can certainly contribute to spiritual wellness. People who feel spiritually well are clear about their meaning and purpose in life and, more often than not, have a sense of balance and peace. Achieving spiritual wellness may overlap with the other dimensions. For example, a person who stays active through yoga or tai chi may find that their practice gives them that spiritual sense of balance and peace. Others may find that working in the garden gives them physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness, or that spending time with family or working on a worthwhile community project combines social and spiritual wellness.

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Social Wellness involves having relationships with friends, family, and the community. You might say that social wellness is having an interest in and concern for the needs of all people, as well as a tolerance for and an appreciation of differences. Sustaining positive connections means being willing and able to both give and take within a relationship, in order to keep it balanced and to ensure that both people benefit from that connection.

Slide 18:

Emotional Wellness is sort of like getting along with yourself. It involves the ability to express feelings, both good and bad, and cope with stress and traumatic life experiences. Resilience is an important aspect of emotional wellness. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from tough times and to adjust to emotional challenges. People who feel emotionally well are able to enjoy life, even though some days are harder than others.

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Financial Wellness is having a sense of control and knowledge about your personal finances. Of course, feeling financially well means that you have enough financial resources to meet your practical needs, but also that you know how to make the most of what you have.

Slide 20:

The dimension for Occupational Wellness involves participating in activities that provide meaning and purpose. For many people, occupational wellness means having a satisfying job, but we use the word “occupation” in a broader sense. Doing volunteer work, being involved in a leisure group, and doing creative activities also provide meaning and purpose. Occupational wellness, in its most simple sense, means having something to do that you look forward to, that you think is valuable, and that gives you a sense of accomplishment.

Slide 21:

Many people have found our wellness tools, based on these dimensions, to be helpful. So next, I will tell you about some of the benefits.

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Both *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* and the *Wellness Daily Plan* focus on what you are doing, emphasizing what's going right. Why focus on strengths? There is both a practical answer and an emotional answer. The practical answer is that what you are doing now becomes the foundation for any change or improvement you want to make in the future. The emotional answer is that reminding yourself of your strengths helps build your confidence.

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Once you are fully aware of what things you are doing now, you can begin to think about new goals and action steps. The most useful goals for your own wellness are small achievements that you want to reach within a month or two. The action steps are the specific things that you plan to do every day or week to reach your goal.

Slide 24:

In the next section of the webinar, I will provide you with tips about using these tools on your own.

Slide 25:

As I mentioned earlier, the *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* booklet is set up so that you can fill out a worksheet for each dimension, one after the other. Each dimension is defined in the booklet, and there is space where you can list some strengths you have in each area. There also is a list of activities that you can try for wellness in that area. For example, under emotional wellness, you might try expressing your feelings, coping with stress in healthy ways, learning from mistakes, and keeping a sense of humor. You can use this list as a checklist of what you are already doing. After the list, you can then make notes about what new things you'd like to try next and what support you need to make those changes.

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We recommend using the booklet to help you think carefully about what you are doing in each dimension, so it might take a few weeks to go all the way through it. Although it is designed to be a self-guided tool, we recognize that everyone needs support to be well. We encourage you to share the booklet with family, friends, and other supporters, and to review the dimensions, plan, and grow together.

Slide 27:

The *Wellness Daily Plan* includes definitions and examples for each dimension and a chart that you can use to document your weekly progress. On the chart, on the left-hand side, is a space to write the things you can do each day to feel well for each of the 8 dimensions. The chart lists the days of the week across the top, so it's easy to check off what you do each day.

Slide 28:

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

Slide 29:

The *8 Dimensions* booklet can be used in a group where people go through it together, with each section of the booklet being completed during a group session on that wellness dimension. For

example, you might hold a 10-week group that begins with an overview of the 8 dimensions, covers one dimension for each of 8 weeks, and then has a wrap-up session at the end. During the group time, members would write in the booklet and, if they choose, share with each other. Plenty of time needs to be set aside for discussion about each dimension and to help group members identify their strengths, no matter how small. Examples and instructions for some wellness activities could be added, like a description of stress management techniques in the session on the physical wellness dimension, or adding tips for starting a conversation in the session on the social wellness dimension.

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A wellness 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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Both the *Wellness Daily Plan* and the *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* booklet can be used to supplement other groups. For example, on the web site for our Solutions Suite, you will find a set of *Wellness Activities* lessons. If you are running a group using these lessons, participants may appreciate having copies of the *8 Dimensions* and *Daily Plan* tools to help them expand what they are learning and take charge of their own wellness.

Slide 32:

Thank you for your time today. I hope you'll consider using these two tools 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 *Wellness in 8 Dimensions* page of our web site to learn more.

Slide 33 (announcer):

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