

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Wellness Want To's

Although we all want to be healthy and free from ailments to the best of our abilities, getting there is rarely an easy road to travel. Not only do we face certain heredity factors, childhood experiences, and frequent adult “mañana’s” we tell ourselves—but we also face our own lack of “want to’s” that help us make lasting behavioral changes.

Where do you get your want to’s? Do they really keep you moving toward a life of wellness? Or are they just short stops along the way to your same old patterns you are so accustomed to? Isn’t hard to break old habits? I personally know those gremlins telling me “I work so hard, I deserve a treat now and then” or “I’m never going to lose this weight. I might as well accept that it’s all heredity.” Yet, even in these two gremlin examples, there is a thread of truth with a twist of trickery in them.

Yes, we all work hard and do deserve a treat now and then. But what kind of treat do we think will satisfy and how much of that delicious treat tricks us!? There is a way to satisfy your sweet tooth without decaying yourself along the way. Maybe losing weight is also hard for most of us, but it definitely isn’t just heredity that helps us to that extra food portion or lingering at the couch while our bodies are screaming to move and groove.

What drives our behavior has everything to do with our “wellness want to” being ignored because we are just too exhausted, overworked, and stressed out. So, how do you turn this train around? No matter how many “shoulds” you hear from your spouse, your doctor, or latest health alert, they will never help you make lasting changes. Something in life may always surprise you and bring you back to your old patterns. Today, let’s begin to change that mindset train from “shoulds” to permanent “want to’s”, hopefully without a health crisis as a wakeup call. There is nothing more rewarding than to actually enjoy healthy, satisfying whole foods, feel good when you move and exercise, and find simple but effective ways to relieve stresses that enhance our well being.

Throughout this month’s topic, Wellness, we will be focusing on steps toward reducing your “shoulds” and increasing your lasting “want to’s.” Utilizing the Wellness Inquiry form offered to my clients, we will move through a series of questions and responses that will bring out some valuable and possibly surprising self-discoveries. Remember, as you move through each step, *Wellness Want To’s* involve the whole person, not just the physical.

So, let’s get started with these initial questions, writing down your responses in a journal to share with your family or close friend.

What are your dreams? What dreams have you given up on?

What are your top core values?

What stops you from having the life you want to have?

What parts of your life (Personally & Professionally) are working best now?

What parts of your life (Personally & Professionally) are working least well now?

As you ponder your responses to these questions, keep in mind that wellness is not an isolating experience. The “We” in Wellness means developing a healthcare/wellness team around you (as well as family/friends) that supports your wellness and life goals. That is not an easy task in itself with the perplexity of our nation’s healthcare system trying to make a bridge between conventional and complementary/alternative medicine. Yet, you being center stage along with your key motivators of “want to’s” will connect you with those who are your advocate and have the expertise to help you reach the highest level of wellness you desire.

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Wellness Factors to Focus On

Remember the questions asked you last time--**What are your dreams? What dreams have you given up on? What are your top core values? What stops you from having the life you want to have? What parts of your life (Personally & Professionally) are working best now? What parts of your life (Personally & Professionally) are working least well now?**

Have you set up a core foundation for yourself with your responses--helping you move toward living from the inside or “want to’s” instead from externals or “shoulds”? If not yet, do this right now before moving on to the following health data and wellness factors to focus on before moving to the basics of movement/exercise, nutrition, and stress management. Your responses to these initial questions above create the essential foundation for a solid perspective on wellness as holistic driving your *want to’s* for lasting behavioral changes.

When you start to visit those healthcare and wellness providers for clues to your condition or goals for enhancing wellness, you will undoubtedly be hit with a barrage of perspectives and recommendations. For most conventional family physicians, your quick 15 minute conversation would focus on your symptoms toward giving you relief and see what happens; or ordering certain tests, such as traditional

blood work, x-rays to see what shows up. Then you may be given some meds and/or told to visit the physical therapist for some traditional exercises that you may or may not continue once your 6+ sessions are over.

In the meantime, you are probably taking an assortment of nutritional supplements that your health food store clerk suggested and what the latest health info online provides. Let's not forget your visit to an herbalist, chiropractor, or health spa. Since you are the only one who probably has seen them all and these providers surely didn't consult with each other as a wellness team ought to, where do all these options really fit together? Much of it is trial and error. And some work quite well, others don't, even aggravates the condition. So, you continue your journey to find just the right team even if they don't talk with each other about the positive and negative interactions of each independent recommendation and self-help ideas.

Be of good cheer, though. We are all on the same journey to not only cope with conditions but possibly find some real solutions along the way. Keep in mind that some solutions may not necessarily be sanctioned by your family physician or even your chiropractor. Our wellness journey undoubtedly teaches us many things as well as informs and educates our own providers working hard to care for us. This means you are again center stage and always will be with each decision.

So, let's start with some basic health data needed to keep your focus as you seek wellness solutions and work with your providers. You may download the Wellness Inquiry Form to begin this process (available on my website, bottom of page, http://www.harvestenterprises-sra.com/services_wellness.htm) or create your own wellness notebook to place your core foundation responses (from last issue) and

subsequent sections offered throughout this month. Here is your next set of basic health data needed to move you forward:

Who are your healthcare providers (include primary, conventional, alternative, integrative, nutritionist, dentist, etc.)—name, phone number?

What was your date of last primary physician visits?

What was the date of your last dental appointment?

Do you have an optometrist/ophthalmologist? If so, last eye exam?

List any lifestyle changes your healthcare providers have recommended/prescribed.

List any medications (note physician if prescribed, and impact intent of medicine).

List any dietary, nutritional, supplement regimen (vitamin, minerals, protein & medicinal foods; note healthcare/wellness provider if prescribed).

Rate your overall health (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor).

What are your current health concerns and/or conditions?

What is you height, weight?

Do you consider yourself to be overweight, underweight, perfect/normal weight?

If you are at perfect/normal weight, what do you do to maintain your status?

If you are overweight, what are you doing to reach and maintain your optimum weight?

With the next issue, we will target Movement/Exercise/Breathing/Body Awareness.

Here is a taste of the questions to be asked. What kinds of movement do you engage in throughout the day/week? Are you aware of your breathing pattern with each movement or position? Between now and next issue begin to think about how movement and breathing are integral partners in building and sustaining energy levels, concentration and balance.

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Wellness through Movement, Breathing, & Body Awareness

With your first yawn in the morning, your eyes peep open, you stretch your arms and legs, and slowly turn to sit up and get out of bed. Your first movements of the day can be key indicators of how your day just might go—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

When it comes to using the word “Exercise” frowns and moans usually result. So, I much rather use the word “Movement.” Why? Because with all forms of movement you are exercising your body and mind. Along with movement you are also breathing. Most of the time we are not aware of our breathing patterns at all. We just take it for granted unless we lose our breath for a moment or choke on something. Then, breathing becomes very important in every way! Movement and breathing are integral partners in building and sustaining energy levels, concentration and balance.

In order for our body and mind to be in sync with movement and breathing we need to have keen Body Awareness. Do you ever just take five minutes out of your day to stop listening to the noise of daily life and focus on how your body is feeling? How’s your breathing—shallow, steady, shaky, deep? How’s your posture?

Begin to practice conscious breathing and focused body awareness of all your body part from top to bottom, inside out. And whenever you think of exercise, think movement—how you sit, walk, run, climb, eat, drink, sleep, dance, stretch, even yawn. Then you will

begin to define exercise with all its accompanying movements throughout your day, while creating greater body flexibility and mobility. In addition, as you stay more fully in the moment, you will begin to experience the benefits of genuine body awareness that soothes the soul as well as the body.

You will now be asked a series of questions and response statements all around your movement, breathing, and body awareness. Write down in your notebook, your responses, and share them with your family or close friend.

EXERCISE—MOVEMENT/BREATHING/BODY AWARENESS

1. What kinds of movement do you engage in throughout the day/week?
2. Are you aware of your breathing pattern with each movement or position?
3. What is your predominant body stance/posture, breathing, and movement with these position in this table:

Movement (Internal/External)	Predominant Body Stance/Posture (e.g. aligned, slouching, stiff, relaxed)	Breathing & Movement Pattern (rate awareness = 1 low – 5 high)
Standing Still		
Slow walk		
Fast walk/aerobic		
Run/aerobic		
Sitting alone with relaxation		
Laying down alone w/ relaxation		
Sitting at computer		
Sitting while having dialogue at work/at home		
Others?		

4. Do you sleep well and through the night? If not, please explain.
5. Do you follow a regular exercise plan? If so, what is your routine?

6. How frequently do you exercise?— Ideally times per week for min./session
7. When you look in the mirror at your body, what do you see?
8. How does it feel when you move your body?
9. What is the driving force for you to move your body on a regular basis?
10. What gets you stuck and slows you down from regularly exercising and moving?
11. Do you enjoy exercise and movement? Please explain.
12. What are your motivation drivers for exercising & movement? Check which ones apply to you:

Extrinsic (product/shoulds) Recycling old behavioral patterns	Intrinsic (process/want to's) Sustaining lasting behavioral change
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduces risk of disease	<input type="checkbox"/> Feels good
<input type="checkbox"/> Controls/lose weight (physician told you to)	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment (fun in the flow; stimulation)
<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced fitness	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastery (pleasure of learning, curiosity)
<input type="checkbox"/> Future focused	<input type="checkbox"/> Present focused
<input type="checkbox"/> Have to (because someone told me to)	<input type="checkbox"/> Want to (I decide because it's right for me)

13. Do you engage in physical activities that increase risk of harm (e.g. extreme sports, survival games)? If so, please explain.
14. What one action are you committed to take this month starting today to reach for wellness in movement, breathing, and body awareness? Ask a family member or close friend to help you stay accountable to this commitment.

Next article will cover Nutrition/Eating pattern. In the meantime, think about what kind of routine eating pattern you have. Is it low-carb, strict vegetarian, ovovegetarian, balanced animal/plant, whole foods, two meals per day, three, or something else?

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Wellness through Nutrition & Stress Management

While driving to your next appointment or meeting, you decide you are hungry and drive through your local fast food restaurant to grab a bite for lunch. Then off to your meeting where coffee is offered with a delicious lemon bar. A couple hours later it really doesn't matter that the dinner hour is just around the corner. You'll probably wait to eat around 8 or 9pm anyway. Does this sound familiar?

What kind of routine eating pattern do you have? Is it low-carb, strict vegetarian, ovovegetarian, balanced animal/plant, whole foods, low sodium, two meals per day, three, or something else? Are you aware of what is actually included in that drink, bread, pasta dish you love? With all the variety of foods that are available to us throughout the nation and around the world, the average American actually eats a fairly narrow range of foods. A typical daily eating pattern may include in every bite cow's milk, beef, egg, soy, wheat, nuts (primarily peanuts), cane sugar, corn. Just look at the labels or even your own recipes at home.

Unfortunately for a large number of people, there are eight foods that account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions—milk, egg, peanut, tree nut (walnut, cashew, etc.), fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat. And when one of us has one or more of these allergies, it's not easy to just drop in to your nearest fast food restaurant—or any restaurant! I was one of those people for

more than twenty years. Yet, through the challenges I have learned to love variety of foods more than ever. The highest level of nutrition and whole foods became my cornerstone of physical health and well being.

For many years I was required to avoid certain foods and rotate food families on a seven-day and then four-day rotation routine. For example, Day One was my wheat day, Day Two Corn/Oat day, Day Three Barley/Spelt, Day Four Rice/Millet day. I learned to make the most interesting breads that way, particularly when there were no eggs in the recipes except on one day only. As I tell my story to groups, I initially made great dog biscuits—hard as a rock, perfect as a door jam. It took some time and experimentation, but I came up with some pretty delicious recipes. I also learned how to more creatively use spices and herbs with every dish.

The same rotation routine was done for all meats, fruits, vegetables, nuts/seeds, oils, sweets, and spices/herbs. One of the pioneers and Father of Clinical Ecology/Environmental Illness was Theron Randolph. Without his life's devotion helping people like myself, I don't know where I would be today. All I know, I would probably not be as healthy and allergy-free as I enjoy right now.

No matter your age or health condition, all benefit from the highest nutrient value of foods. Quality nutrition also goes a long way to reducing the effects of stress. Managing stress in life focuses on balancing your physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs and goals. there are twelve wellness dimensions that impact how you handle stress—your view of radical self-care/responsibility & love toward self and others, your awareness/pattern of breathing, sensing, eating/nutritional needs, movement/exercise, feeling/emotions, thinking/shaping your life & world, playing & working, communicating, intimacy & sex, finding

meaning, and transcending/embracing faith. All play an important role in managing stress in our lives and maintaining lasting behavioral changes.

So, let's begin with basic questions to consider as you more clearly commit yourself and your family to the healthiest eating pattern in the years to come, including practical ways to live a more stress-free life.

1. **What does your routine eating pattern/diet mainly consist of?** (check as many as apply—low carbohydrate, strict vegetarian, ovovegetarian, ovolactovegetarian, balanced animal/plant/complex carbs/lean protein/low fat, animal protein, whole foods, low sodium, low fat, low sugars, others)
2. **What is your routine daily eating pattern? (Morning/Midday/Evening)**
3. **Do you drink alcoholic beverages?**
4. **If so, what and how much do you consume?** (e.g. beer, wine, liquor/day/week)
5. **Do you drink sodas? If so, what kind of sodas do you drink and how much?** (e.g. diet, regular ounces-cans/day/week)
6. **Do you daily drink water? If so, how much water do you drink per day?**
7. **Do you smoke and/or chew? If so, what?** (e.g. filtered/unfiltered cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco/day)
8. **In the past two years, what major changes and events have you experienced (challenges, crises, opportunities)? Name three.**
9. **Describe three of your most challenging stressors.**
10. **What three routine things do you do to manage and relieve stressors?**
11. **How are your finances? (e.g. great, good, fair, poor) Please explain.**
12. **Do you gamble? If you do, how frequently?** (per week/month/year)

13. Are you in debt from your gambling? From overspending? If so, how much debt as a % of your net income? Please explain.
14. How satisfied are you with the relationships you have with spouse/significant other, family, friends, co-workers? (e.g. great, good, fair, poor) Please explain.
15. How do you have fun?
16. What do you do that brings joy and happiness in your life? How often do you do this?
17. What do the words Radical Self Care mean to you? Consider each word separately then together. What synonyms describe each word for you? Then reframe the term in your own words.

Radical –
Self –
Care –

18. If you were at your best this moment, what would you do right now?
19. What is your favorite (consider what emotions rise up with each favorite thing)—

Color:
Music:
Season:
Time of day:
Room:
Thing to do:
Movie:
TV show:
Way to relax:
Sport:
Recreation:
Hobbies:
Day:

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