

Holistic Health – An Integrated Approach to Wellness

Gillian Goerzen, BSc (kin), BCRPA TFL/ PT

According to the dictionary definition, health is described as the “freedom from disease or ailment.” While this definition may have been adequate in generations past, current generations are striving for more out of their life. In today’s high performance society, it is no longer acceptable to simply live an adequate life; we strive for an exceptional life.

Wellness is an approach to living life exceptionally - in body, mind and spirit. Holistic Health is an approach to health care that encompasses the body, mind and spirit (wellness). Practitioners following this approach believe that the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of life are all interconnected. In considering a corporate approach to wellness it is essential to the success of our programs that our approach is holistic in nature. So, where does that leave us? In the spring 2008 column, we discussed the “5 Simple Steps to Developing a Corporate Wellness Initiative”. In summary the article encouraged managers to take the following steps to develop an effective program:

Step 1: Find out what employees want using surveys, focus groups and interviews.

Step 2: Ask yourself the following questions

1. *What is our budget for the program?*
2. *What type of space do we have available to provide a program?*
3. *When are you going to offer the programs (survey responses should be considered here)?*

Step 3: Research your options. Consider the space you have available and what types of programs would suit that space (keeping Steps 1 and 2 in mind of course).

Step 4: Implement your program considering the following: marketing and promotions, employee availability for participation, and consultant credibility.

Step 5: Get Feedback and re-evaluate the program based on the feedback. Note: If you would like to read the article in full please visit www.lwhs.com and click on resources for the link.

Keeping these steps in mind, let’s examine our programs holistically. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How is our program challenging the physical well-being of our employees?
- How is our program improving the mental well-being of our employees?
- How is our program encouraging the spiritual well-being of our employees?

Historically, corporate wellness programs have done really well when it comes to addressing the physical component of the wellness triad; but what about the mental and spiritual components of our workforces? We may be addressing physical activity by offering onsite fitness programs, or running pedometer challenges. We may even be taking it one step further and offering nutrition workshops and encouraging water and healthy snacks at meetings; but how are we supporting our employees as they deal with the ever-present stressors of work and life? How are we encouraging work-life balance? How are we supporting mental and spiritual wellness?

For many managers, the development of this aspect of the wellness programs is a bit of a mystery. Most managers aren’t really sure what the options are, or where to start. Taking employee feedback into consideration, really examine the associated needs and start thinking outside the box. Be creative in how you meet and exceed those needs. Let’s look at some examples.

Aspect of Wellness	Possible Feedback	Potential Solutions
Mental Wellness	"I'm overloaded by meetings/ email" "There isn't enough time in the day" "my job causes me a lot of stress" "I have issues with depression/ anxiety"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Efficiency Practices Workshop/Training - Time-Management Workshop/Training - Stress-Management Workshop/Training - Confidential Counseling Services (through your EFAP Provider)
Spiritual Wellness	"I never have any time for myself" "I'm always wound up at the end of the day" "I can't seem to leave work at work" "I'm very isolated at my desk"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Onsite quiet rooms/meditation rooms for reading and reflection during breaks - Access to online guided meditations - Educating and encouraging employees around taking regular mini-breaks - Development of employee clubs and events to encourage social engagement

Wellness is unique to each individual and is flexible and malleable to each individual's needs, desires and goals. As program managers, if we can develop a program that has a holistic approach to wellness and creatively meets our employee demands and needs, we will not only have a healthy work force, but a well work force. So listen to your workforce, think outside the box and offer a program that helps your employees live an exceptional life!

Gillian Goerzen (BSc. Kin) is a registered Personal Trainer and Director of Development for LifeWorks Health Solutions. LifeWorks provides outsourced wellness solutions to corporations, resorts and residential developments of all sizes. Whether you are looking for onsite lunch and learns, workshops and team building events or comprehensive development and management of your onsite wellness facility LifeWorks Health Solutions has solutions that will work for you. Visit us online at www.lwhs.com for more information.