

# Breaking new ground in Health and Wellness – The ERN program.

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Within all organisations there are 9 common work related values which influence the wellness of the organisation. Of these Health and Wellness is either neglected or poorly structured. The wellbeing of every individual within an organization influences the wellbeing of the organization (and vice versa). It has been shown in a number of industries that a well structured, multidisciplinary approach to wellness offers both employees and employers much benefit.

Within the mining industry, as a general rule, health promotion is conducted and received well. On its own health promotion may lead to a state where an individual is free of disease or infirmity, or what is termed a neutral state. Before moving at wellness progression one must look at the true definitions of health and wellness.

**HEALTH** is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. - World Health Organization.

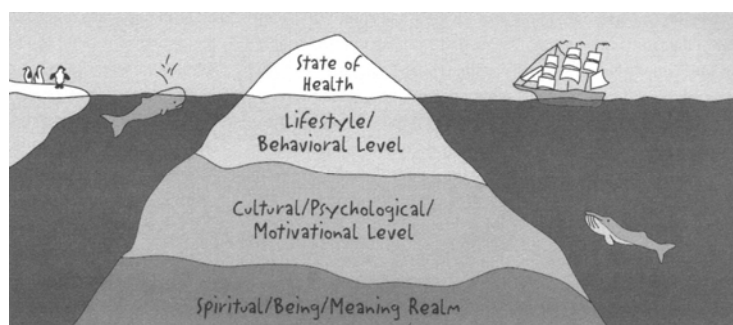
The latter half of this definition provides the clue to the earlier statement that often programs are poorly structured. The focus of many available programs is to be free from disease or infirmity whilst failing to look at the individual as a whole. Add to this the following definitions of wellness and it is evident the focus needs to change.

**WELLNESS** is a process - a developing awareness that there is no end point, but that health and happiness are possible in each moment, here and now - Travis, J.W. & Ryan, R. S., The Wellness Workbook (2004); an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more successful existence.

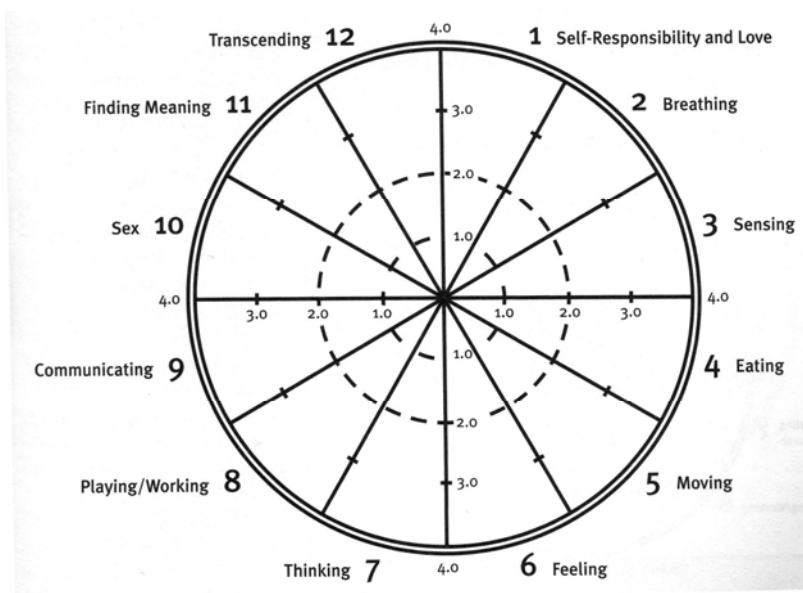
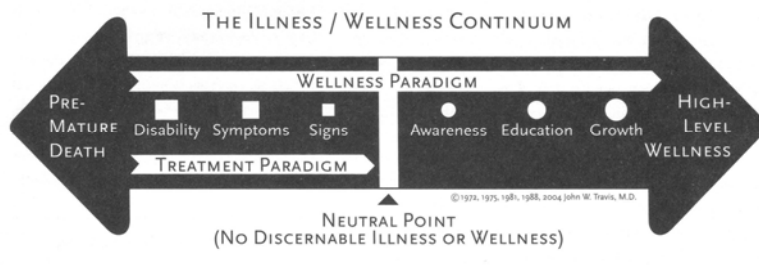
The National Wellness Institute further states that wellness is; a holistic concept: it is looking at the whole person, not just their blood pressure, body fat, exercise behavior or what a person had for lunch. It involves physical, social, emotional, occupational, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions.

The wellness model used by ERN has been adapted from the model of John W Travis. In the Wellness Workbook (2004), Travis, J.W. & Ryan, R. S., clearly state that health and disease can be likened to an iceberg. The state of health is just the tip of the iceberg. In order to understand the causes of illness and poor health we must look below the surface at the following major levels.

- Lifestyle / behavioral level
- Cultural / psychological /motivational level
- Spiritual / being / meaning level



Wellness is described as being a continuum. To be able to move to a state of high level wellness an individual requires a vehicle. The vehicle used is the wellness wheel. The wheel consists of 12 spokes each targeting a separate area of total wellness.



Imagine a wheeled piece of mining equipment. If we have a tyre which is flat or damaged how well will it move? Slow and Bumpy. The same answer can be applied to the individual. If the wellness wheel is not round and even, the individuals progress through the wellness continuum and life can be slow and bumpy.

Movement through the wellness continuum is not dependent on the size of the wheel only its roundness and balance. The larger the wheel, obviously, the faster the progress of the individual to high level wellness.

Looking from an organizational perspective imagine the company being the vehicle and the individual being the wheel. If one individual has a flat tyre the entire company will experience a slow and bumpy ride through to high level organizational wellness.

Within any organization the maintenance of equipment is given high priority. The same focus is needed for our workforce. If the health and wellness of the individual are maintained, both the organization and the individual will become safe, efficient and productive.

The guiding principles of the ERN Health and Wellness program are as follows.

1. The wellbeing of every individual within an organization influences the wellbeing of the organization (and vice versa).

2. Within an organization, individual and organizational well-being is maintained and advanced through a combination of individual self-regulation and cooperation between individuals
3. Individuals and organizations tend to seek balance between: (a) maintaining the current level of functioning and (b) pursuing further development.
4. The safer and more supported an individual feels within an organization, the more likely he or she will develop higher levels of wellness.
5. Healthy patterns develop in increments, rather than all at once.
6. Health risk reduction and prevention or alleviation of illness are not identical to wellness enhancement. Optimal health is achieved by accomplishing both.

There are three levels associated with the ERN Health and Wellness program.

1. Information: designed to support healthier lifestyle choices (e.g. pamphlets, audiotapes, videotapes, handouts, etc.).
2. Personal Change: Workshops, seminars, classes, individual counseling, biofeedback, and other activities.
3. Organizational Support: Assistance in establishing more supportive worksites (via consultation and involvement in related projects).

These three levels must be utilized as a single package to reach a state of High Level Wellness for the workforce.

The reaching of High Level Wellness is achieved through the use of a three-step process currently utilized by Wellness Africa and aims to enhance lifestyle and workstyle. This three-step method has shown great success in Africa and is well accepted throughout the community and employers.

The steps of the process are Health and Wellness Audit, Creating Support and Empowerment.

The first step, Health and Wellness Audit, focuses on the treatment model, which is essentially the lower end of the Wellness Model leading to a Neutral Point.

The next step, Creating Support, will assist each participant to move from the neutral point toward the goal of High Level Wellness. The creation, through the Health and Wellness program, of a culture where good health and wellbeing is the norm requires the final step of Empowerment. Participants require empowerment to adopt a lifestyle and work style of:

- Self responsibility
- Balance within all dimensions (Body, Mind, Soul, Occupational, Emotional, Social, Meaning & Purpose)
- Maximum personal development

The Health and Wellbeing program is designed with the understanding that:

- the natural needs of their people are met
- their uniqueness can be utilized to accomplish organizational goals.
- sustained behavior change are only possible through a systematic supportive culture change process

The use of measurable results focused intervention is essential and there needs to be a focus on the individuals needs.

The ERN Health and Wellness program has been designed to incorporate all areas of Health and Wellness including those listed. The initial focus is on the recognition and treatment of disease states

within the workforce. Once the neutral point is reached the participants will be guided through the necessary stages to a state of High Level Wellness.

There are an increasing number of preventable premature deaths in Australia. Within an ageing workforce there are a number of health issues that become prevalent. Research shows that the five major causes of premature death are all linked by common risk factors, behaviors and/or health habits associated with physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

The program has core components focusing on these major risk factors associated with premature death. These are offered to all groups within the workforce and utilize a multi focused approach of information dissemination.

Other areas of the program are provided to an individual on a needs based, as required, basis. There is a need to tailor each individual's program to his or her needs.

As with managing fatigue, possibly the hardest requirement in our industry, health and wellness is multi focused and no single, standardized, approach will achieve the desired outcome.

A multi-disciplinary approach is required to allow for expert knowledge dissemination.

The team should consist of:

- Registered Nurse
- Nominated Medical Advisor
- Physiotherapist
- Dietitian
- Occupational Therapist
- Occupational Health Advisor
- Other non medical personnel

Registered Nurses provide much of the direct contact, in consultation with the remainder of the multi-disciplinary team.

Any person, utilizing the resources developed by the multi-disciplinary team, can present toolbox talks. And in a number of areas there is scope for presentation by guest speakers.

All individual results of the program remain confidential and a group report is provided on a regular basis. This report will indicate the participation rate and progress of the group toward High Level Wellness.

The tools developed for this program can also be utilized for Pre, Progressive and Post – employment screening.

It is recognized that each individual is not equally motivated to seek personal changes in his/her level of health and wellbeing. The following change readiness model (developed by Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986) is used to tailor the Health and Wellness program according to varying levels of motivation:

- **PRECONTEMPLATION** - no intention to make changes in a given area
- **CONTEMPLATION** - intention to make changes in a given area within the next 6 months
- **PREPARATION** - intention to make changes in a given area within the next month
- **ACTION** - changes in a given area have been started (but not completed) within the last 6 months

- **MAINTENANCE** - desired changes have been maintained for more than 6 months
- **RELAPSE** - there exists a perception of a loss of control over making desired changes (may occur in any stage)

The monitoring of the program allows for early recognition of individuals moving from one level to the next. Adjustment in line with these changes allows for continual progress toward high level wellness.

**What is in it for the individual?**

Simply - a longer, healthier and more fulfilling life.

**What is in it for the employer?**

It is well documented that the implementation of a well structured Health and Wellness program will provide the following benefits:

- Lower absenteeism
- Employer of choice
- Increased productivity
- Return on investment
- Reduces medical related claims and lost time
- Increased motivation
- Healthy Wellness culture
- Increase in safety

With these benefits in mind it is easy to see how an organisation can receive a greater than 5 fold return on investment.

The organisation and the individual can achieve high level wellness. Through supporting the individual and providing the tools to progress toward high level wellness is the key to increased profit within the organisation.

It is time to look outside the box. When looking at health and wellness there is no box. Focus on repairing and maintaining the wheel and you have the vehicle to progress to high level wellness individually and as an organisation.