***Personal Wellness***

**Definition**

The Global Health Institute defines personal wellness as “the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health” (**https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/).** This requires developing an evidence-based understanding of the factors that promote or negatively impact physical and psychosocial well-being, as well as the ability to assess one’s current state of physical and psychosocial wellness, set goals for improving well-being, and implement a plan to achieve those goals. Personal wellness is multidimensional and includes physical, social, intellectual, emotional, environmental, financial and spiritual well-being.

**Rationale and Intent**

University students are highly vulnerable to physical weight gaini and emotional distressii as they face a new and demanding environment that often challenges their ability to maintain a positive state of wellness. Compounding these challenges is that many college students lack the knowledge or tools to improve their overall wellnessiii. As a result, Americans have a high prevalence of physical and emotional health issues into adulthood that can negatively impact personal success and happiness. Some stressors include financial issues, difficulty accessing and utilizing nutritional food, barriers to engaging in physical activity, and poor sleep patterns. Additionally, poor dietary choices, increased caloric intake, lack of physical activity and exercise, and high stress are common factors that contribute to compromised physical and psychosocial wellness in college students, leading to increased risk for chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and a variety of mental health issues. Data support that wellness courses can lead to improved long-term health outcomes as well as increased academic success and retention. At the heart of these scientifically proven programs is providing students the knowledge and skill set to develop a physically active lifestyle to reduce risk of coronary artery disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases as well as practices that promote mental health.

**Goal**

Fitchburg State University students will develop effective strategies to enhance personal wellness by applying physical, nutritional and behavioral strategies to improve the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind.

**Course Objectives**

Courses seeking the personal wellness designation should help students acquire knowledge and practical skills aimed at enhancing personal wellness. To this end, such courses must address the essence of objectives 1-5 listed below. Courses may emphasize one area of wellness but must include, and integrate, the five objectives.

1. Understand the benefits of physical activityand exercise, as well as proven (evidence-based) strategies to improve personal physical activity habits
2. Understand healthy nutritional practices and the role of diet in health and disease with the intent to improve dietary choices
3. Understand factors that promote or detract from psychosocial wellness. This includes, but is not limited to: identifying cognitive biases, identifying causes and effects of stress as well as effective strategies for managing stress; identifying effective coping skills; understanding the importance of healthy relationships to social and emotional health; practicing mindfulness and gratitude
4. Critically analyze health and wellness claims in order to make informed lifestyle choices.
5. Assess one’s current state of personal wellness, including analyzing personal wellness data and external obstacles to wellness, with the goal of developing a personal wellness plan focused on one or more of these dimensions of wellness.
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