

Lifestyle and the WeLLNESS Model

Dr. Nicholas Hatcher, DNP

"When "I" is replaced by "We", Illness becomes **We**llness." - Shannon L. Alder

In this section we will explore a WeLLNESS model that I've designed to evaluate key areas of lifestyle as well as construct a plan of care for addressing these key areas. What follows is an introduction to the WeLLNESS model, using WeLLNESS as an acronym. As a tool for assessment, this acronym falls into place after exploring psychiatric symptoms.

"I", Illness

Included as the first part of the acronym as a reminder to place previously explored psychiatric symptoms and syndromes in the context of any below-the-neck conditions.

Incorporates a review of systems, medical and surgical history, and a consideration of current medications.

Evaluate for findings suggestive of endocrine, gastrointestinal, and inflammatory conditions as these tend to drive root cause examination.

How is your physical health?

Are you going for regular wellness visits and managing acute and chronic conditions?

"W", I-to-We Conversion, Relationships

Emphasizes interpersonal relationships and their impact on the person's experiences.

Includes family, friends, and intimate relationships.

Knowing **who** is important highlights the individual's value system.

Exploring patterns in relationships over time as well as the individual's childhood narrative will illuminate attachment and personality structures as well as any underlying trauma elements.

Who is important to you? (Illuminates values)

Are you tending to important relationships?

Are there any relationships in need of repair?

What was it like for you growing up? (Attachment structure)

“L”, Leisure

Glimpse of **what** is important to an individual, further building upon our understanding of the value system.

Knowing what the individual does to nourish themselves as well as relax and recharge highlights the individual’s coping mechanisms.

Could easily flow into a conversation about perceived stressors as well as the physical and psychological impact of stress.

How leisure and stress are balanced can be extremely insightful and can set the stage for potential intervention.

What is important to you? (Illuminates values)

What do you do that nourishes you?

What helps you reduce stress, relax and recharge? How effective is this?

“L”, List Resources and Barriers

Builds upon the first “L”, but expands on strengths and resources that impact the individual’s life now.

Can include academic, occupational, and living environment or material resources as well as socioeconomic status.

On the other hand, there may be significant barriers that get in the way of who and what matters to the individual.

Here it’s useful to know how the individual navigates through these barriers, highlighting important problem-solving and solution-focused skills.

What are your strengths and resources that impact your life right now?

What are significant barriers that get in the way of who and what matters?

Can you construct a plan and implement a routine to navigate through daily life?

“N”, Nutrition

Recognized even by Hippocrates in his famous saying “Let food be thy medicine”. Coincidentally, he also said “all diseases start in the gut”. Heeding the words of the father of modern medicine from approximately 2,400 years ago, this area emphasizes dietary and nutritional habits, allergies and food sensitivities, potential risk factors for imbalanced nutrition, and gastrointestinal as well as food relationship disturbances.

Are you eating and drinking things that promote health?

Do you have any food allergies or sensitivities?

Are you implementing a specific diet?

“E”, Exercise

Exercise and physical activity have effects that transcend psychology to include changes in many organ systems. Exercise has the capacity to outperform several psychotropic agents when used appropriately. Explore the individual’s overall activity levels, exercise routines, and any perceived barriers to activity and exercise. Explore the individual’s motivation for activity-related changes.

How are your activity levels?

Do you implement a specific exercise routine?

“S”, Sleep

Explore whether or not the individual is generally sleeping enough to feel good. As an extension of this, inquire about anything that may be interfering with the ability to start, maintain, or complete sleep. What does the individual’s sleep routine look like? Sleep quality and the psyche are intimately related, and this can be demonstrated at a neurobiological and neurochemical level.

Are you sleeping enough to feel good?

Are there things interfering with your ability to start, maintain, or complete sleep?

“S”, Substances and Addictions

Dr. Gabor Mate provides a great definition of addiction, “a complex psychophysiological process that is manifested in any behavior in which a person finds temporary pleasure or relief”.

Notice Dr. Mate’s definition does not mention “substances” or “drugs”, because substance use is just one of these behaviors captured by the definition. This expanded view could also segway into an exploration of any additional impulsive or compulsive behaviors.

Are you using any substances that have a noticeable impact on your physical or mental health?
(Substance)

Are there any actions you routinely perform to reduce stress and anxiety? (Compulsivity)

Are there any actions you perform that seem out of your control? (Impulsivity)

“S”, Spirituality

This “s” goes beyond the natural spelling of wellness and likewise goes beyond day-to-day experiences. Spirituality does not necessarily refer to religion, rather it’s how we relate to a sense of purpose, connectedness, presence, and community. Knowing how what a person “does” aligns with who and what a person “is” helps to draw a link between goals and values. This domain highlights some of the motivation driving behaviors as well as the contextualization and narrativization of life experiences.

How would you describe yourself?

How would you describe your overall purpose?

How does what you do align with who and what you are?

Do you incorporate any particular belief structures or practices into your routine?