

Words of Wellness



August-September 2021

Emotional Wellness

As we wind down summer and get ready for fall 2021, we turn our focus to emotional wellness—the ability and skills to express feelings, enjoy life, adjust to emotional challenges, cope with stress, and recover from traumatic life experiences.

Emotional wellness affects, and is affected by, all the other seven dimensions. In this edition, we include some strategies that many report have helped them create and maintain emotion wellbeing, as we begin to get ready for return to school and transition from summer to fall.



Stress and Tension

Stress is an inevitable part of life, but it doesn't need to overwhelm you. If you can, avoid situations and people who trigger you. Deep breathing and relaxation activities are accessible self-care habits that can help, as well as activities such as yoga or aromatherapy. Yoga has become a very popular activity many have found useful to create and restore motional wellness (*see page 3*).

A short [self-compassion meditation](#) can help calm you and provide a reminder of the importance of being kind to ourselves.

You might try taking a walk outside to shift your perspective, get some fresh air and benefit physically. The fall is a great time to walk outdoors! Walking can improve your mood and is a great stress reliever. A calming activity when you walk alone, walking also can be a time for support and companionship and when you go with others. When you and your neighbors walk regularly, your community benefits from social connection.

We may not be able to avoid all stressors, but we may be able to redirect how we react and engage in **an activity like walking** that can impact emotional wellness! There are many activities we can do to release stress and tension.

Take Charge!

We can never have complete control over life—things do happen that we don't expect. At times, these present challenges. At other times, such surprises bring gifts. Consider the Serenity Statement, which focuses on *accepting what you can't change and changing what you can*.

Recognizing where you have control in your life and taking charge of those areas will help you realize there is a lot that you *do* and *can* control. There is a lot within our control we can do for our emotional wellness.

Read about the [Take Charge!](#) workbook (*page 2*)

Take Charge!

Using the [Take Charge!](#) workbook, Collaborative Support Programs of New Jersey, Inc. has been offering four one-hour session groups over Zoom.

The book is designed to offer individuals a self-paced, guided exploration of each of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. With space for responding to written prompts and even coloring, this workbook creates an opportunity for users to get curious about their own wellness strengths and barriers and create action plans for improving personal well-being.

Take Charge! is composed of eight chapters—one for each of the Eight Dimensions of Wellness (emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and spiritual). This workbook contains information, ideas, and useful strategies.

The online series involved explanations, examples, and discussions of each of the eight wellness dimensions, addressing two dimensions in each session. The groups involved six or more participants.

The group facilitators were impressed at the active contributions and open discussion among participants, many of whom did not know one another prior to joining the group.

Feedback from participants was generally positive. For example, they loved the book content and found it generally relevant—not just for people who seeking mental health or substance use treatment.

They also appreciated the activities in the workbook and appreciated having the prompts to reflect on their own wellness through the activities and through the group discussions. The workbook and the discussions resulted in a deeper understanding of the eight dimensions. Participants enjoyed hearing what others are doing for their own wellness.

Some participants had suggestions for ways to improve the program. For example, some would have liked more time to explore each dimension. Often, discussions focused on what people are already doing. Some participants wanted more time to consider what they might do differently to better support their own wellness.

While the online groups worked well, some of the participants expressed an interest in a face-to-face workshop or retreat. Some wished for continued connection—either through an ongoing drop-in group online or through a follow-up group session several weeks after the *Take Charge!* series ended.

You can preview the workbook by visiting the [Take Charge!](#) website, where you also will find an order form. There also is an email address where you can submit questions.

Policy Research Associates provides a variety of free resources on [wellness](#) and other topics related to behavioral health. Click on the resources tab at www.prainc.org



Yoga

Family supporters, peer providers, and many professional service providers are finding yoga to be beneficial. Yoga may help improve symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD, and boost emotional well-being and mood.

In addition to relieving stress, yoga can help build resilience to stress—the ability to bounce back when experiencing a difficult challenge. Yoga may be the oldest practice of self-development, teaching how to connect your *mind, body,* and *spirit*, which is important for well-being and long-term recovery.

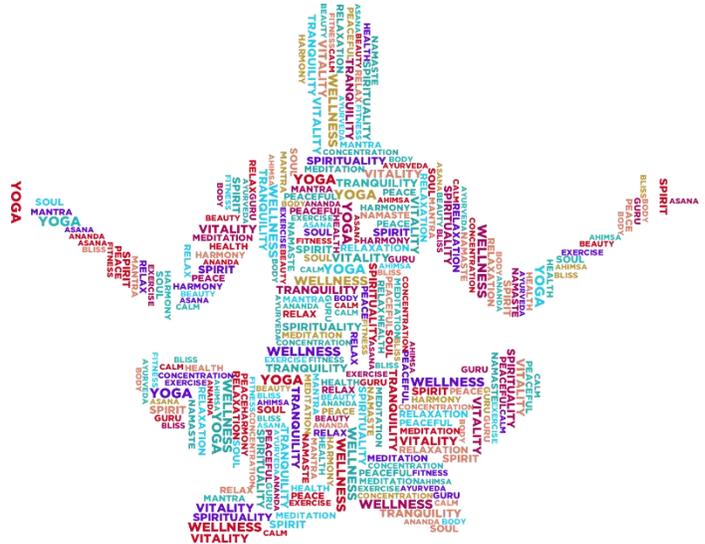
Yoga uses a series of poses, or body positions, often practiced in a specific order to create a flow. Different types of poses are used to increase **flexibility, strength,** and **balance**, all important strengths for recovery and for maintaining your long-term physical health.

Over time, regular practice with these poses help strengthen the body. Slow, deep breathing is coordinated with the poses. Breath control is calming physically, quieting stressful thoughts while focusing awareness on the body.

Meditation, which goes along with the Yoga poses, is a time to relax, quiet your mind, and for many enhances emotional wellness. Being more centered can help you cope with hassles and problems that arise in your day-to-day life. Yoga can help many sleep better.

Yoga connects and centers your mind, and body. There are truly many emotional wellness benefits. It is not a cure for addiction, stress or emotional imbalance but can be a useful tool for people in recovery family supporters, peer providers and professionals.

Consider learning more about how Yoga!



The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has published an e-book on yoga that you can download for free.

This 39-page publication, [Yoga for Health](#), provides an overview of what the science says about how yoga can benefit your health and wellness. Information is included on yoga for children, older adults, pregnant women, and people with health conditions. Tips are provided in the e-book on how to practice yoga safely, as well as a summary of national survey findings about the use of yoga in the United States. You'll even find a link in the e-book to a [video](#) on the Science of Yoga (18 min).

If you want to learn how to do Yoga, look for a nearby beginner's class. Learning with a teacher is often a good idea. However, if that's not possible for you right now, check out various yoga YouTube channels.

References on the benefits of yoga include:

- (1) Gard, T., Noggle, J. J., Park, C. L., Vago, D. R., & Wilson, A. (2014). Potential self-regulatory mechanism of yoga for psychological health. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8(article 770), 1-20.
- (2) Harkness, K. N., Delfabbro, P., Mortimer, J., Hannaford, Z., & Cohen-Woods, S. (2017). Brief report on the psychophysiological effects of a yoga intervention for chronic stress. *Journal of Psychophysiology*, 31(1), 38-48.
- (3) Find more facts and references at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health at <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/yoga/introduction.htm#hed5>



[National Recovery Month](#) is a national observance held every September to educate Americans that substance use treatment and mental health services can help people with mental and substance use disorders to live healthy and rewarding lives. Now in its 31st year, **Recovery Month** celebrates the gains made by those living in recovery.

References and Resources

- Illustrations are listed online as free for reuse without attribution from pixabay.com
- Self-compassion: Find guided practices (downloadable audio) at <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>
- Harvard Medical School Special Health Report: *Walking for Health*. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness/walking-for-health#about-report> (not free); <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/5-surprising-benefits-of-walking>
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases: *Walking: A Step in the Right Direction*. <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/walking-step-right-direction#:~:text=Like%20other%20kinds%20of%20regular%20physical%20activity%2C%20walking,bones%20and%20muscles%20helping%20you%20burn%20more%20calories>
- Take Charge! is a workbook to enhance well-being with the eight dimensions of wellness: <https://www.prainc.com/product/take-charge-workbook-enhance-well-eight-dimensions-wellness/>
- Learn more about science and yoga from this 16-minute video from the National Institutes of Health (National Center on Complementary and Integrative Health): <https://nccih.nih.gov/video/yoga>
- More yoga references:
 - <https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/yoga-addiction-recovery>
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5812135/>
 - Kuppili PP, Parmar A, Gupta A, Balhara YPS. Role of Yoga in Management of Substance-use Disorders: A Narrative Review. *J Neurosci Rural Pract*. 2018;9(1):117-122. doi:10.4103/jnrp.jnrp_243_17.
 - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3646290/>
 - Khanna, S., & Greeson, J. M. (2013). A narrative review of yoga and mindfulness as complementary therapies for addiction. *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 21(3), 244–252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2013.01.008>