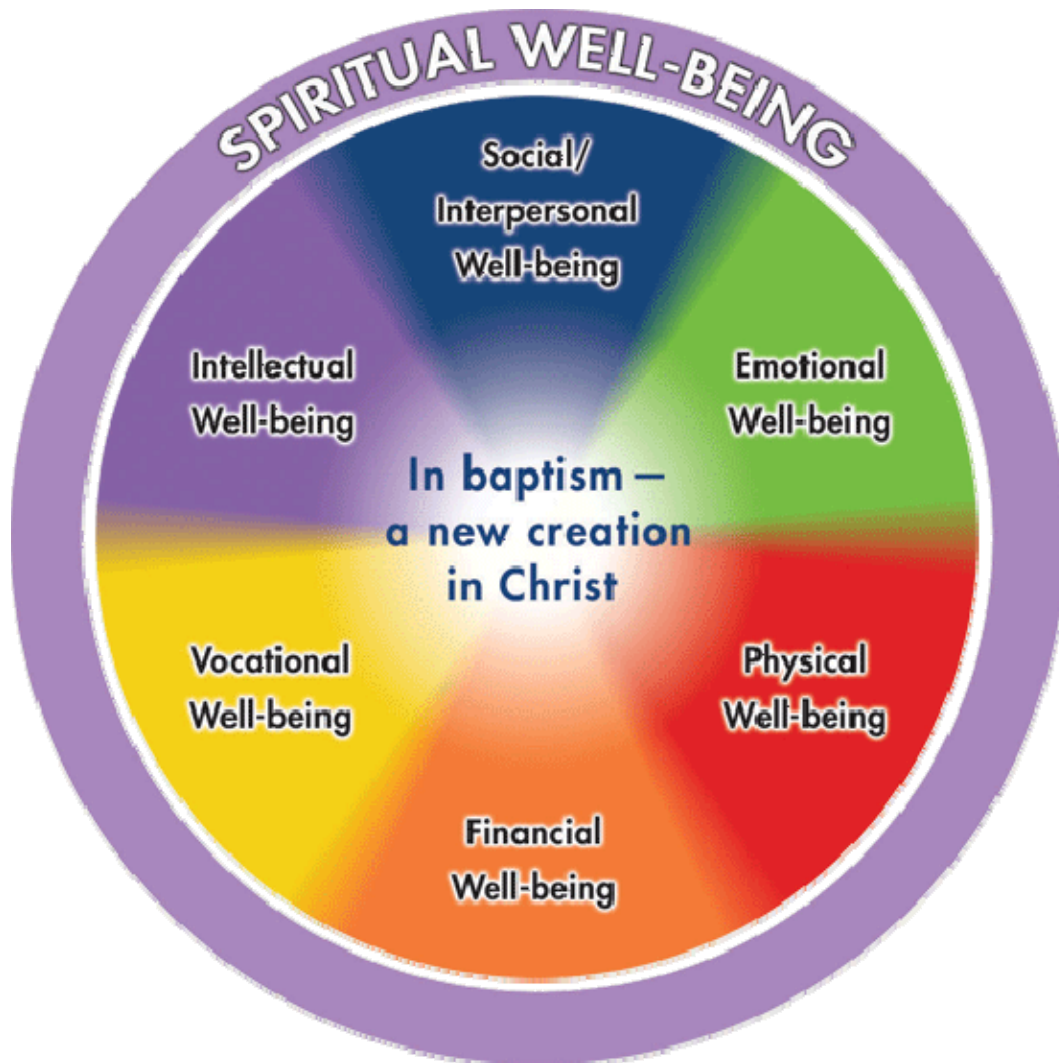


The Wholeness Wheel



The Wholeness Wheel is a guide to balancing all aspects of health and depicts the interconnectedness of the individual aspects of wellness. It is the picture of a process — dynamic, centered, in balance, contained, inter-related, vital, and colorful.

Many of us may feel that we realize our full wholeness potential at different times of our lives — peak athletic performance as a young adult, peak intellectual performance in college or graduate school, peak emotional health in a happy marriage, peak vocational health in mid-life in the attainment of a vocational goal. The wheel reminds us that, although peak experiences are wonderful and healthy, being truly healthy and whole is about being in balance and intentionally nurturing all aspects of health surrounded and supported by spiritual health.

Physical well-being

We are marvelously created by God. While we are not all born perfectly healthy and no one makes it through life without injury or illness, with tending and nurturing we can live well even with disabilities, injuries, or illness. Those with good health can lose it as a result of unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors. Keeping the wholeness wheel in perspective means optimizing our physical health through good nutrition, physical activity, and avoiding risks to our health. It does not mean worshipping physical health at the expense of other aspects of health.

Emotional well-being

Being emotionally well means feeling the full range of emotions and expressing those emotions appropriately. Not feeling emotion is a sign of stress or depression, just as having emotions that you cannot control may be the sign of emotional distress. Physical health problems can affect our emotions and emotional problems affect our physical health. One example is anger and hostility, an emotion that puts one at significantly greater risk for heart disease. Keeping our emotional health means taking time in the day to be peaceful and centered, just as it means sharing emotions with others.

Social well-being

We were created to be social persons by God with instructions to help and love each other. We are nourished by the love and intimacy of our family and friends. Isolation is a significant risk for depression and premature death. Whether we are introverted or extroverted, regular social contact is essential for health. Being healthy means having healthy relationships with family, friends, co-workers and others. Studies have shown that volunteering in service to others actually lengthens life.

Intellectual well-being

Alzheimer's disease or dementia is feared by all who have seen or heard about the personal frustration or social disruption it causes. While we cannot be certain that we will never experience dementia or something similar, using our minds keeps them alert and active. Use it or lose it! Satisfy curiosity by seeking answers. We can stretch our minds by experiencing new things — music, art, hobbies, or travel. Pushing ourselves at work by seeking out new responsibilities and pursuing lifelong learning keeps us healthy and growing.

Vocational well-being

Having a sense of purpose is important in living a healthy life. We all want to feel that we are using the gifts God has given us to make this world a better place. We need to be aware of what those gifts are and make good use of education and training to hone our skills. We need to always be seeking for opportunities to make a difference. If not through our occupation, then perhaps through volunteering in the community, nurturing our family, or actively participating in church.

Spiritual well-being

Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength impacts everything we do and everything we are. Starting first with your spiritual health makes balancing the wheel much easier because we know whose we are. Nurturing your relationship with God through daily prayer or devotion is the first step. Knowing that God is always present and has given us the gift of grace through the death of Jesus Christ allows us to stumble along the way and keeps us from getting lost.

Copyright © 1997 InterLutheran Coordinating Committee on Ministerial Health and Wellness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.