

What Is Wellness and Personal Development?

Wellness is a concept that refers to a person's holistic well-being. This can include their physical, mental, and emotional health as well as how they engage with the world around them. Social relationships, how engaged a person is in their community, and how much they like their job can all contribute to wellness. Personal development plays a role in wellness because those who continue to make growing and learning an important part of their lives may have more overall life satisfaction. (1)

Wellness is difficult to measure because every person has their own unique definition of success and well-being. For example, one person may find great satisfaction in working a high-pressure corporate job with a lot of responsibility while another prefers being self-sufficient and farming.

The beauty of personal development is that each person is able to create a path for themselves that allows them to continue to grow and mature in any or all areas of their life. It's important to see personal development as an ongoing journey subject to change and not as a rigid set of rules or a checklist for success.

What Is a Personal Development Plan?

A personal development plan is a way for someone to formally map out:

- Where they want to go in life
- What qualities they want to develop
- What issues they may need to work on that are currently holding them back

There are many types of personal development plans someone can use as a guide, but the main components are: (2)

- A list of the skills, talents, and attributes the person already has
- A list of skills or qualities the person wishes to develop
- Tangible benchmarks for self-improvement in those skills or qualities, also known as personal development goals
- Ideas for where to learn or practice these skills
- A log or tracking system of some sort to note progress, challenges, and accomplishments

In some cases, someone may be using a personal development plan for a specific reason, such as in their job or as part of their education. These types of plans may be more formal with spreadsheets and logs, while individuals using them for personal growth may decide to stick with a simple pen and notebook setup.

What Are Personal Development Goals?

Personal development goals are the finish line someone wants to end up at in a certain area of their life. For example, if someone wanted to work on their physical fitness, they might have a personal

development goal of being able to run a mile in under 9 minutes. Someone working on being more empathetic might have a goal of volunteering a certain number of hours with organizations that help at-risk populations.

The most important part of creating personal development goals is to ensure that the goals are SMART goals. SMART is an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. (3) With the second example above, a non-SMART goal might be to "be more empathetic." However, this type of wording doesn't provide a benchmark for knowing when the goal is complete or a clear path to getting there. By changing to something like "spend 10 hours volunteering at the local food pantry in the next 2 months," the person now has a SMART goal that's much easier to act on and has a clear finish line.

Why Is Personal Development Important?

Personal development is an important part of continuing to grow and mature as a human being. People aren't made to stay stagnant. Continuing to put effort into the areas that are important to them is one way people can ensure they make the most of life and are engaged with and fulfilled by the world around them.

Personal development can help people increase the quality of their work life, which can make a large difference in a person's overall well-being due to the number of hours spent at a traditional, full-time job. Spending 40 hours a week happy, invested, and positively engaged in a career can raise the quality of a person's life in other areas as well. Conversely, spending those 40 hours in a miserable and toxic work environment can make it harder to function well in other social and family roles.

Personal development can also help people feel more connected to the world around them. Personal development goals could include learning new technology, investing in key friendships, or meeting more people in the surrounding community. All these are important positive steps in ensuring a person's needs are met and that they're able to continue to have a high quality of life as they age. (4)

Why Is Wellness Important?

When many people think of health, the first — and maybe only — thing that comes to mind is often physical health, but wellness encompasses much more than this. Health and wellness are about ensuring people are able to not just live free of illnesses but to live happy, fruitful lives and be independent and mobile as long as possible. Compare an 80-year-old who's been bedridden for several years and has no social or family connections with one who's still living independently and involved in social and community activities. Statistically, the latter is likely to be healthier physically and have a higher level of quality of life. (1)

Promoting individual wellness through personal development plans is also important for society as a whole. A community of happy, engaged people is likely to be more peaceful, be safer, and have more economic security. (1) This may be because those focused on wellness and personal development want to create a better society for all and have more of their basic needs met. This lets them free up time and energy to help others and be active in the surrounding community.

What Is Mental Wellness?

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines mental health as a person's "emotional, psychological, and social well-being" and notes that mental health can affect nearly every aspect of a person's life. (5) Mental wellness is an important factor in how someone is able to adapt to stressful or changing situations in their life and how they relate to others around them. For example, someone with good mental health may be able to navigate the death of a loved one in a healthier manner than someone with poor mental health.

Mental wellness can also have a strong impact on a person's physical health, making it just as important as eating a balanced diet and getting enough exercise. (6) Those interested in taking steps toward better mental health can:

- Regularly connect with others in their community
- Prioritize friend and family relationships
- Try new things that interest them
- Volunteer their time and talents for those in need
- Work on personal development to grow their coping skills
- Partner with mental health professionals to address ongoing issues or areas of need

Mental wellness and personal development may not be two phrases that immediately seem connected, but it's clear that they're both a significant part of achieving and maintaining overall well-being.

Sources:

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2. <https://help.open.ac.uk/pdp>
3. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/smart-goals/>
4. <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/personal-development.asp>
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