

## ORGANIZATION NEWS

### Information/Education Page

### Living Well After Traumatic Brain Injury



#### What is meant by “living well”?

- Living well means taking care of ourselves and treating ourselves well!
- It means paying attention to, learning more about, and doing more of the things we know are good for the body, mind, and spirit.

#### Why is this important for people with traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

- After a TBI, some people find it more difficult to “live well.” TBI can create barriers to healthy activity, such as:
  - Physical limitations or pain;
  - Difficulty with remembering and carrying out healthy behaviors;
  - Low mood or reduced motivation;
  - Practical problems, such as limited transportation and finances.

**There ARE ways to live well with a TBI.** Here are some tips that may help you feel better, both physically and mentally. Living well can help you live longer, too!

#### Keep in mind:

1. *Each of us makes choices every day that affect our health and wellness.* You can choose to adopt a healthier lifestyle.
  2. *Change is hard.* This is true for everyone with or without a TBI! The best way to change your life for the better is to do it gradually...
- Tip: Set goals that you can achieve in *1 to 2 weeks* to prevent discouragement.

**How do you get started? The very first step is to ask yourself, what are you doing right now to improve or maintain your health?** Everyone knows that good health means exercising and eating right. But there’s more to it than that! **The Wellness Wheel** helps you look at 5 areas of healthy living:

 **PHYSICAL:** Staying active, eating healthy, and keeping up with medical needs;

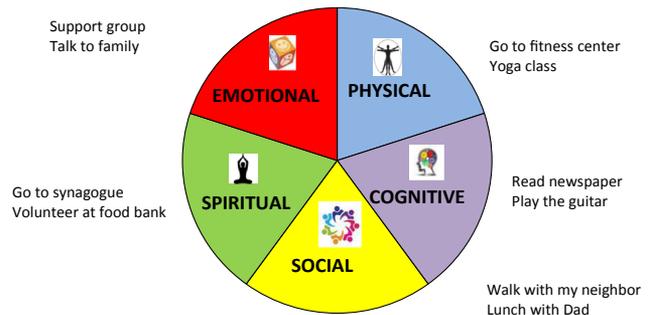
 **COGNITIVE** (mental): Stimulation from learning, thinking, and solving problems;

 **SOCIAL:** Having satisfying relationships, being involved in a community;

 **SPIRITUAL:** Anything that refreshes the spirit, whether it’s religion, meditation, nature, or creative activity;

 **EMOTIONAL:** Being able to surf the normal highs and lows, and being able to tell when they *aren’t* normal, so you can seek help from others.

#### The Wellness Wheel\*



Here are some examples of healthy activities in each section of the Wheel. What activities could you put in *your* wheel? Is it balanced? Or are there some areas that might need more attention?

Here are some ideas you might want to try for adding to your wellness wheel:

#### • Get moving:

- Walk with a friend once or twice a week.
- Limit TV time to an hour a day. Stand up and move, even at home.
- Try new activities that might be *fun* for you—yoga, Frisbee, Ping-Pong, skiing. You can join a team or class at your recreation center.

- Remember to wear a helmet to protect your brain during any activity where you might hit your head (biking, skiing, etc).
  - **Choose healthy food and drink:**
    - Eat whole grains, vegetables and fruits, colorful food, fish, lean meats.
    - Substitute vegetable oils, like olive oil, for animal fats.
    - Cook at home at least several times a week. You could invite a neighbor to join you!
    - Carry a water bottle and sip it during the day.
    - Limit alcohol, and watch its effects carefully—an injured brain is more sensitive to alcohol and other mind-altering substances.
  - **Exercise your brain:**
    - Join a book club, start a card or game group, take a class.
    - Go to the library—it's free, and libraries have a lot more than books!
    - Learn to play an instrument or take a singing class.
    - Keep up on a topic of interest by reading the paper or internet news.
  - **Look for meaning in life:**
    - Join a religious or spiritual group, or a nature club.
    - Get a free app on your phone for mindfulness or meditation exercises.
    - Volunteer to do something you feel is important.
    - Get a pet and take good care of it!
  - **Get organized for your health:**
    - Keep a list of your medications and what they are for; take this list when you go to the doctor.
    - Keep a list of your doctors, what they do, how to reach them, and when you have your appointments.
  - **Aim for calm and happiness:**
    - Join a support group.
    - Confide in someone you like and trust, in person or by phone.
    - Ask your doctor for a referral for counseling if you need to talk to a professional.
    - Sleeping can be difficult for some people after TBI. If you're having trouble, talk to your doctor.
- **Tip: Try activities that touch on more than one area of the wheel!**

There are lots of activities that improve wellness in *more than one area*. For example:

-  **Taking a walk** with a friend can help your *physical, social, and emotional wellness*.
  -  Learning about **mindfulness** can help your *emotional, spiritual, and cognitive wellness*. Add *social wellness* if you learn in a class!
  -  **Volunteer**—helping others can make you feel good emotionally, and make you think. It can also get you up and moving and meeting new people!
- **Tip: Keep it simple!**

There are lots of free, easy ways to improve your wellness. Don't forget that the best change is gradual. Small accomplishments add up!  
**Here are some Healthy Living Resources you can find online:**

- ❖ **American Heart Association:** <https://healthyforgood.heart.org>
- ❖ **American Academy of Sleep Medicine: Tips for Better Sleep** <http://www.sleepeducation.org>
- ❖ **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyliving>
- ❖ **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/prevention-and-wellness>

## Authorship

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