

# New Help for the Effects of Aging on Your Body and Mind: an innovative approach

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*How do we approach aging in a way that honors our bodies and our lifestyle?*

## Three Basic Facts

1. What your body needs to stay healthy and vibrant at ages 20, 40 and 60 are vastly different.
2. There is no one system for well being that has proven effective for everyone.
3. Some individuals and groups seem to adapt to the aging process better than others.

Wide scale studies have tried to isolate the factors that help individuals and groups maintain their health, but even these studies can be contradictory or offer solutions that are impractical for most of us, e.g., live in the mountains, eat a diet of goat yogurt.



## Common denominators for those who do stay healthy involve:

- a natural belief in their own health and health practices, i.e., diet, exercise, social contact,
- support for their methods of staying healthy such as local caregivers who know and work with them,
- an environment that helps maintain their ongoing well being.

A coordinated approach that takes advantage of these factors to promote immediate and long term health needs is absent in our current health care system. A model that takes these factors into account is being pioneered in the Midwest by a network of integrative providers called InWellness. This is an example of one innovative initiative to make a shift in our health care system to proactive lifestyle improvement.



**Whole person assessment** - assessing a person's health needs must take into account more than one's biometrics (height, weight, blood pressure, blood panel...). Unless one's individual constellation of physical conditions, lifestyle and beliefs are taken into account, you just have statistics, not an appreciation for the whole individual.

An assessment that covers all three facets of the person: physical, lifestyle and beliefs is more

comprehensive. This combines the standard tools found in a clinic or hospital with the holistic measures not found in these institutional settings. These indicators are fast becoming recognized as essential to total health. The Wellness Inventory is one such instrument gaining national attention (see sidebar). An in depth view of the whole person also includes a comprehensive measure of values systems to help tailor one's health and wellness plan to what they are motivated to do *and believe in* - and is age and lifestyle appropriate. The *InWellness Assessment* uses three well researched measurements to cover these components of whole person assessment.

**Individualized coaching and resources** - having a trained professional to help interpret the assessment results, create an individualized wellness plan and follow up support and accountability for a year is what builds in lasting lifestyle changes. Educating the public to become their own intelligent advocates is the way of the future. InWellness's approaches this by training specialized wellness navigators to educate and advocate for clients' well being and wise resource utilization.

When these resources involve a *network of practitioners* that is varied in its traditional and integrative approaches to health care, they can be selected to meet the individual needs and beliefs of clients. When a collaborative vs. a competitive system of rewards is fostered among professionals, quality of care is improved. Further, when inter provider communication and consultation is streamlined, service is expedited and crises avoided. InWellness is building such a network with a cooperative spirit and communication tools.

**Community support** - working and playing with others who support positive changes in one's lifestyle is essential for maintenance of any wellness plan. Now days most effective is both a virtual and live community of like minded individuals who support one another to live a healthy lifestyle that is uplifting and pleasurable. Online newsletters that inform clients of wellness and arts events that are educational and entertaining, presentations of topics that are timely and cutting edge on health matters, and introductions to providers who have exceptional services, perhaps unknown to many are means to integrate the virtual and the live.

Online networking services allow members to interact with each other and share stories of their own discoveries and successes. Personal responsibility for one's health is

“...Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff calls for a 21st century definition of fitness that recognizes the importance of a more holistic paradigm that balances performance and readiness with health and wellbeing. ‘Only in this balance can the resilience of the [military] be sustained.’

The aim...was to select several exemplar indexes to..assess, in a holistic, multidimensional way, the state of an individual's health and fitness that goes beyond just the absence of disease or injury. The Wellness Inventory was one of four assessments selected....

The Wellness Inventory is a comprehensive holistic assessment and life-balance program, designed to help people gain personal insight into their state of physical and emotional well-being. The program offers motivation, guidance and tools to transform this new awareness into sustainable lifestyle change and a renewed sense of health and wellbeing.”

...Wellness Inventory Featured in Special Edition of *Military Medicine*, “Total Force Fitness for the 21st Century: A New Paradigm,” 2010.



increased with a secure online service allowing members to store their own health records and allow only practitioners they select to view their history and wellness plan. Sponsoring cultural and entertainment events, seminars and workshops also enhances a sense of community support. These and other creative endeavors are part of what one community organization of independent providers, InWellness, sees as a

contribution to reversing the crisis in health care.

Most critical is a community's commitment to creating a new model of health and welfare that is not dependent on paying for costly overhead and technology when it is not needed. Health care advocates and providers must educate the public to be in charge of orchestrating their lives while wisely using community resources. Confidence in the provider/client relationship must be restored. InWellness addresses this by selecting providers who subscribe to the *Principles of Holistic Health and Wellness Practice* (adapted from the American Board of Holistic Medicine). As citizens of the new millennium, we can create healthy communities that help its members fit their lifestyle to their bodies and their environment as they grow at every age.

What one needs for one's 20, 40 or 60 year old body and one's unique life circumstances must be assessed and supported in ways that fit each individual. There is no one size fits all plan for the good life. InWellness presents one way to join a growing educated community of like motivated members enjoying healthy lifestyles from stroller fitness classes to an evening with the Pops Orchestra.

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