



The National Wellness Institute's

# SIX DIMENSIONS OF WELLNESS

Introduction & Summary

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# An Introduction to Wellness

## What is WELLNESS?

Throughout time and across cultures, the term "wellness" has been defined and applied in many ways. The National Wellness Institute encapsulates these interpretations by acknowledging that:

- Wellness is a conscious, self-directed, and evolving process of achieving one's full potential.
- Wellness encompasses lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment.
- Wellness is positive, affirming, and contributes to living a long and healthy life.
- Wellness is multicultural and holistic, involving multiple dimensions.

Canadian-born author and physician Halbert L. Dunn, MD (1896–1975) was the leading figure in establishing a national vital statistics system in the United States and is known as the "*father of the wellness movement*." His work focused on the distinction between good health—not being ill—and what he termed "high-level wellness," which he defined as "*a condition of change in which the individual moves forward, climbing toward a higher potential of functioning.*"

This simple yet profound explanation of wellness was embraced by the National Wellness Institute and led directly to the compelling definition of wellness we still use today:

**Wellness is functioning optimally  
within your current environment.**

## Applying the Six Dimensions of Wellness Model

Applying a multidimensional wellness approach that considers the WHOLE PERSON can be useful in nearly every human endeavor. NWI's Six Dimensions of Wellness model brings forth awareness of the interconnectedness of each dimension and how they contribute to living a healthy life.

This holistic model explains:

- How one can develop and direct self-awareness, self-regulation, curiosity, and motivation.
- How one can develop their belief systems, identify their values, and create a strong worldview.
- How one benefits from regular physical activity, nutrition, strength, vitality, and self-care.
- How one can enrich life through work and recognize its connectedness to living and playing.
- How one can use creativity and stimulating mental activities to share their gifts with others.
- How one can enhance their environment by building better living spaces and social networks.
- How one can positively contribute to their environment and engage in their community.

## Additional Resources

The following Six Dimensions of Wellness resources are available for download on the NWI website ([NationalWellness.org/Resources](https://NationalWellness.org/Resources)) or in the [NWI Members-only Professional Resources Library](#).

- [Six Dimensions of Wellness: Defining and Assessing Wellness](#)
- [Six Dimensions of Wellness: Self-reflection and WELL Plan](#)

# NWI's Six Dimensions of Wellness

**Mindfully focusing on wellness builds resilience and enables individuals to thrive amidst life's inevitable personal and professional challenges.**

