



WELLNESS PHILOSOPHY

by Richard J. Kelliher, Psy.D

Wellness, a relative concept in and of itself and by most enlightened definitions, has as much if not more to do with one's state of mind or attitude towards one's state of well-being than one's actual state of disease/illness/wellness. The Integrated Model (below)

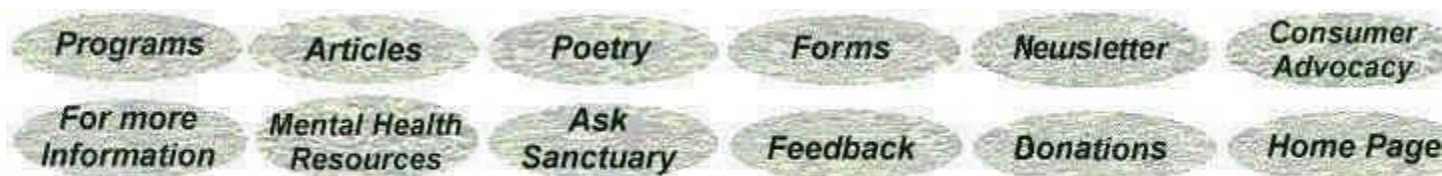
THOUGHT

BIOLOGY SPIRITUALITY FEELING

BEHAVIOR

attempts to look at and work with the whole person and assumes that a change, shift, or transformation in any one part effects in some, as yet unquantifiable way(s), each of the other parts. It can generally be assumed that the process and outcomes of these summed changes can be at least partially quantified via mental (attitudinal) or behavioral measurement indexes. Additionally, the model assumes that it is not physical or metaphysical reality but a person's perception and subsequent interpretation of that "reality" that serve as determinants of a person's process along the infinitely varied paths of life. Thus, the marvelous richness in nature's physical and biological world and the endless diversity of physical forms and forms of life are recreated in the personality, perceptions, and motives of each individual. This richness can be studied in the phenomena of Wellness and Illness, in the endless forms of individual adaptation by which people adapt and reconstruct themselves when faced with the challenges and vicissitudes of life. Successful adaptation and the maintenance of (or return to) homeostasis at a different level require ongoing awareness and acceptance of what is and some desire for change. In the above sense, various disorders and diseases can play a paradoxical role, by bringing out latent energies, developments, evolutions, transformations, energies, motivations, and shifts in perception that might never have been seen, or even be imaginable, in their absence. It is the paradox and potential gift of a disease that might evoke creative potential and in a sense serve as the necessary foundation upon which a new life can be conceived and actualized. With regards to Wellness, it seems that the more one accepts their physical/biological reality and begins to focus on their intactness and well-being, they can achieve in other ways, by another course, or by other means more than their pre-morbid or present physical state suggests. By means of assimilation, accommodation, compensation and adaptation, an active and dynamic process can be initiated that can reconstruct a coherent sense of self and the world. From this view evolves a different conception of "health" and "disease" that define the person's wellness as their capacity and ability to create new life, order, meaning, purpose, and organization. The numerous examples of people whose lives do not contract but are transformed by illness and even jettisoned into wellness (e.g. alcoholic/addict, spinal cord injuries) are evident in our everyday health system

milieus. This is often so not only despite a persons condition but often because of and aided by their conditions. In order to study and ascertain how deeply altered selves and worlds are/can be recreated from a state of "disease", it is suggested of course that all those parts of a person's functioning be attended to as in the Integrated Model. It is hypothesized that attention to any one aspect may be sufficient and necessary for improved wellness but it also seems possible, due to interaction effects, that change in any one component of the system may produce profound changes in any or all of the others. Therefore, it is at least hypothesized that a multimodal approach to wellness may increase the probability of increased psychoneurological changes and assist people in managing or improving their psychoimmunological functioning. **Richard J. Kelliher, Psy.D** is the director of **A Center For Cognitive Therapy of Santa Barbara** and a consulting Psychologist for **Sanctuary Psychiatric Centers**.



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