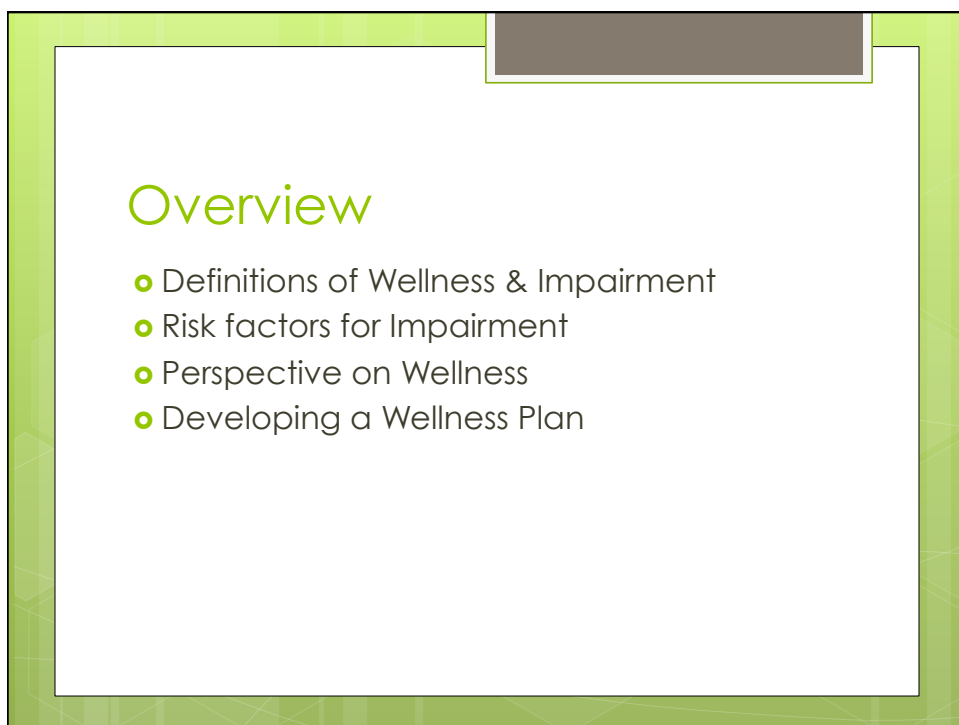


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Wellness for Mental Health Professionals

Margaret R. Lamar, Ph.D.



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Overview

- Definitions of Wellness & Impairment
- Risk factors for Impairment
- Perspective on Wellness
- Developing a Wellness Plan

What is Wellness?

A way of life
oriented toward optimal health and
well-being,
in which body, mind, and spirit are
integrated by the individual
to live life more fully within the human
and natural community.

(Myers, Sweeney, & Whitner, 2000, p. 252)

What is Wellness?

Ideally, it is the optimum state of
health and well-being
that each individual is capable of
achieving.

(Myers, Sweeney, & Whitner, 2000, p. 252)

Why is Wellness Important?

- Fits with counseling approach
 - Holistic, strengths-based
- Promote healthy counselors
- Prevent counselor impairment

What is Impairment?

Therapeutic Impairment occurs when there is a **significant negative impact** on a counselor's professional functioning which compromises client care or poses the potential for harm to the client

Impairment on a Continuum



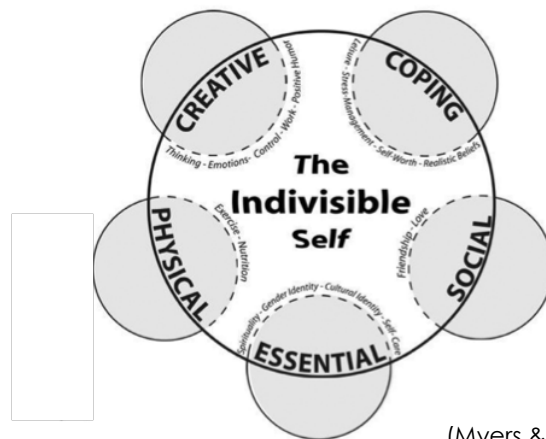
Signs of Impairment

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Traumatization
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Other mental health conditions
- Substance Abuse
- Over-involvement/Overwork
- Relationship Problems
- Unable to establish empathy with the client
- Avoiding supervision/consultation
- Problems with job performance (late, not doing paperwork, not returning calls/emails, etc)
- Ethical/Legal Infractions

Risk Factors

- Systemic Risk Factors
 - Unrealistic workloads
 - Barriers to quality supervision
 - Nature of clientele
 - Workplace culture
- Personal Risk Factors
 - Training, education, experience
 - Personal stressors
 - Natural coping style
 - Personal history
 - Expectations and beliefs

Indivisible Self Model of Wellness



(Myers & Sweeney, 2008)

Indivisible Self Wellness Model

- Creative Self
 - Thinking
 - Emotions
 - Control
 - Work
 - Positive Humor
- Coping Self
 - Leisure
 - Stress Management
 - Self-Worth
 - Realistic Beliefs
- Social Self
 - Friendship
 - Love
- Essential Self
 - Spirituality
 - Gender Identity
 - Cultural Identity
 - Self-Care
- Physical Self
 - Exercise
 - Nutrition

Developing Your Wellness Plan

- Address personal and professional wellness
- Focus on prevention
- Start where you are now
 - When I examine my wellness needs, what area do I want to begin with today?
 - What area is being most taxed today?
- Rethink your “shoulds”
- Be realistic
- Be gentle with your self!
- Devise strategies at different levels

Career Sustaining Behaviors

- Spend time with partner/family
- Maintain sense of humor
- Maintain self-awareness
- Maintain sense of control of work responsibilities
- Reflect on positive experiences
- Try to maintain objectivity about clients
- Engage in quiet leisure activities
- Participate in continuing education
- Spend time with friends
- Turn to spiritual beliefs
- Read literature to keep up to date
- Perceive clients' problems as interesting

How Agencies Can Support Wellness

- Educate your staff and supervisors on the concepts of impairment and wellness.
- Develop or sponsor wellness programs
 - in-service trainings and day-long staff retreats
- Provide clinical supervision
- Encourage peer supervision
- Maintain manageable caseloads
- Encourage/require vacations
- Do not reward "workaholism"
- Encourage diversity of tasks and new areas of interest/practice
- Establish and encourage use of EAP's

Some Ideas for Self-Care

- **Physical**
 - Healthy eating
 - Get enough sleep
 - Physical activity
 - Make time away from technology
- **Psychological**
 - Self-reflection
 - Read literature unrelated to work
 - Decrease stress
 - Do something new
- **Emotional**
 - Spend time with people you love
 - Find things that make you laugh
- **Spiritual**
 - Allow yourself to cry
 - Praise yourself
 - Spend time with nature
 - Find a spiritual connection or community
 - Meditate and/or Pray
 - Cherish hope & inspiration
- **Professional**
 - Take a break during the day
 - Chat with co-workers
 - Set boundaries
 - Arrange your workspace

Resources

- Special Issue on Counselor Wellness
 - Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development
 - 2007. Volume 46, Issue 1
- American Counseling Association
 - Counselor Wellness Resources
- Authors on Wellness: Jane E. Myers, Gerard Lawson, Thomas J. Sweeney
 - Can find their work in various journals

Career Sustaining Behaviors

- Engage in physical activities
- Engage in formal relaxation activities
- Use positive self-talk
- Participate in peer support groups
- Spend time alone in self-reflection
- Vary work responsibilities
- Participate in personal therapy
- Participate in continuing education
- Maintain balance between professional and personal life
- Take regular vacations
- Maintain regular contact with referral networks
- Maintain professional identity
- Limit time spent with clients