



# Wellness Counseling

**A Holistic Approach to  
Prevention and Intervention**

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## Preface

Most people are familiar with the term *wellness*. It is likely that most people you ask would say that wellness is important to them. Unfortunately, individuals who conduct an Internet search in hopes of finding ways of improving their personal wellness will often find a plethora of gimmicks and strategies that are not effective, unsupported by research, potentially harmful, and sometimes expensive. Most helping professionals also acknowledge that wellness is important for their clients. However, various disciplines promote different definitions of wellness. Within the counseling profession, we tend to agree that wellness consists of “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, & Witmer, 2000, p. 252). In our work with clients, we have continuously recognized the importance of viewing their concerns from a holistic perspective. Each area of an individual’s life inevitably affects other areas. We also believe that now, maybe more than ever, it is important to work from a prevention approach. As mental health concerns appear to be on the rise, we can help people work toward optimal wellness in an effort to avert such concerns. At the very least, prevention and wellness promotion efforts can help build coping strategies that can help alleviate or reduce the severity of unavoidable mental health concerns.

In our experience teaching wellness courses and speaking with experienced practitioners, we have received feedback that counselors believe in promoting wellness for their clients; however, they are not quite sure what wellness “looks like,” or they are not interested in learning more concrete strategies to promote client wellness. This book is designed for beginning and experienced coun-

selors who are interested in conceptualizing clients from a holistic wellness perspective and in promoting wellness through prevention and intervention efforts. Each chapter contains up-to-date research and best practices within the wellness domains. We also provide concrete strategies for implementing wellness interventions throughout the book. In addition, we include “Practitioner Spotlights,” where experienced practitioners share their personal experiences implementing wellness interventions. Some additional features of the book include reflection prompts to help the reader process the information, learning activities to help the reader participate in wellness strategies before implementing them with clients, and additional resources for the reader to explore related to the content in each chapter.

This book is divided into four parts. Part I consists of a chapter describing the theoretical foundations, empirical support, and domains of wellness. Part I also contains a chapter discussing the current trends and public policy implications related to wellness. Part II of the book includes wellness domains. We divided this part into five chapters: Mind (e.g., cognitions, intellectual stimulation), Body (e.g., physical wellness, nutrition), Spirit (e.g., religion, spirituality, meaning and purpose), Emotion (e.g., emotion regulation), and Connection (e.g., social support). Part III pertains to wellness counseling in action and contains chapters on assessment and conceptualization, treatment planning, and wellness interventions. Part IV is composed of chapters on wellness with specific populations and settings. Our goal for this section is to provide more depth and specific strategies for implementation. The section includes chapters on wellness across the life span, wellness counseling modalities, wellness counseling in educational settings, and wellness for counselors (i.e., self-care).

## Reference

- Myers, J. E., Sweeney, T. J., & Witmer, J. M. (2000). The Wheel of Wellness counseling for wellness: A holistic model for treatment planning. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 78, 251–266.



## About the Authors

**Jonathan H. Ohrt** is currently an associate professor and counselor education program coordinator at the University of South Carolina. He earned his PhD in counselor education at the University of Central Florida in 2010 and his MA in counselor education at the University of South Florida in 2006. He is a certified K–12 school counselor and has worked for several years providing psychoeducation as well as individual and small group counseling services to high school students in Florida. He has also provided services in a university-based counseling clinic. His current research projects are related to prevention and wellness promotion for children, adolescents, and transitional-age youths; counselor wellness; and group work.



**Philip B. Clarke** earned his MS/EdS in counseling in 2004 and his PhD in counselor education in 2012. He has been a licensed professional counselor (North Carolina) since 2006 and a faculty member in the Department of Counseling at Wake Forest University since 2011. He has worked and interned in multiple counseling settings, including a group private practice, a hospital-based intensive outpatient substance abuse program, a treatment research clinic, and a hospital-based counseling program. He has experience counseling clients with substance use and co-occurring disorders. His clinical experience has also centered on providing counseling for people diagnosed with dementia and their family caregivers. He had the privilege of taking a course in wellness counseling from Dr. Jane Myers, which sparked his interest in

the subject. He has presented and written about wellness counseling for people with substance use concerns, cancer survivors, and family caregivers of people with dementia. His scholarship also includes developing integrative counseling and experiential teaching approaches. In his classes, he strives to engage students through the use of actors to portray clients.



**Abigail H. Conley** is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling and Special Education and is an affiliate faculty member in the Institute for Women's Health, at Virginia Commonwealth University. She earned her PhD in counselor education from North Carolina State University in 2012 and her MA in counseling psychology at Lewis and Clark College in 2006. Her clinical experience is in higher education in both community college and university settings, focusing on providing counseling and advocacy services to survivors of sexual assault. Her research interests include interpersonal violence survivorship and healing, violence prevention, and wellness and resiliency. She serves as an associate editor of quantitative research for *Counseling and Values*, the official journal of the Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Values in Counseling, a division of the American Counseling Association.







## About the Spotlight Contributors

The contributors listed below are mental health professionals, educators, and human services center directors who authored the Practitioner Spotlights found throughout the book. In the Practitioner Spotlights, the contributors impart their knowledge and experience on wellness and wellness counseling with the purpose of illustrating and elaborating on key terms and concepts.

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