The idea of wellness involves much more than just being physically healthy. Why? It's because the mind and the body are so closely connected. For example, let's look at the immune system—which serves as the body's defense against infectious organisms and other invaders. Research has shown that negative emotions—such as anger, frustration and fear—keep the immune system from working properly. On the flip side, positive emotions—such as love, contentment and joy—boost the immune system, increasing its ability to keep us healthy.

Countless studies have proven this mind-body connection. So what's the bottom line? A healthy mind promotes a healthy body...and vice versa!
THE FIVE COMPONENTS OF WELLNESS

To work toward wellness, it’s important to focus on five different components of life, including:

Emotional Wellness. People who are emotionally well are able to express their feelings freely. They know how to handle the stress of their daily lives and know when and how to seek support from others. They also work to develop healthy relationships with others.

Intellectual Wellness. Ongoing education is important for intellectual wellness. People who are intellectually well enjoy learning new things, expressing their creativity, and improving their skills. (For example, by reading this fact sheet, you are working on your intellectual wellness.)

Physical Wellness. Proper nutrition, exercise and other healthy habits are all part of physical wellness. People who are working on their physical wellness avoid the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol. They also seek proper medical care when necessary—including getting preventative testing (like mammograms) and vaccines.

Social Wellness. People with social wellness contribute to their community by maintaining healthy relationships with a variety of people—despite any differences in background or ethnic origin. They practice good communication skills with everyone they meet and when conflict arises, they work to resolve it in a healthy manner.

Spiritual Wellness. People who are spiritually well spend time thinking about their own beliefs and values and strive to find a source of inner peace and strength. This “soul searching” may involve a relationship with a “higher power” which helps them deal with the ongoing challenges that life brings.

JUST A FEW TIPS FOR IMPROVING WELLNESS

• Create a specific plan of action that will guide you toward your goal. Rather than “I will eat better,” try “I will have at least four servings of vegetables every day.” Or, instead of “I’d like to learn something new,” set a goal like “I will read at least one book every month.”

• Keep in mind that part of emotional wellness is respecting yourself as an individual, so make your own decisions about how to improve your wellness. If you decide to change a bad habit to please someone else, chances are you will fail. Instead, it’s important to make changes when you are ready to take better care of yourself and/or to get more out of life.

• Be realistic by not taking on too many changes at once. Wellness habits need to be convenient and easy to fit into your life or you’ll probably give up on them.

• Remember that you don’t have to be perfect; just do the best you can. Wellness is a journey that continues throughout your lifetime. Each step along the way may add years to your life AND life to your years.