



# Seven Dimensions of Wellness AND THEIR IMPORTANCE TO OLDER ADULTS

by Dave Fidlin

Wellness is a broad, all-encompassing term that falls within a number of categories in everyday life. A framework known as the Seven Dimensions of Wellness breaks individual health into spiritual, physical, emotional, career, intellectual, environmental, and social components.

Through each stage, the Seven Dimensions of Wellness play an important role in achieving a

fulfilling life. This is especially true for older adults, where several of the dimensions play a fundamental part of living a fulfilling life post-retirement.

“All seven of the dimensions of wellness are important for our entire community,” says Rob Breidenbach, regional wellness director with Oak Park Place. Rob singled out three specific dimensions as especially

beneficial to older adults: physical, emotional, and social.

### The Emotional Dimension

It’s no secret the pandemic has been a challenging time for people of all ages, but this has been especially true for older adults, who are shown to be particularly vulnerable. While physical-distancing measures continue to be an important safeguard, venues such as Oak Park Place

are doing what they can to help residents emotionally.

“Our emotional dimension is addressed through different educational pieces that we provide by either speaking to our expertise to the residents or hiring out and getting other people to come in and speak specifically about the topic at hand,” says Rob. “A lot of times we delve into stress, which is especially important for this demographic given COVID-19’s impact.”

Thoughts play a crucial part of our quality of life, regardless of age. At Oak Park Place, Rob says staff members strive to create an environment that promotes positivity through classes, activities, and simple gestures.

“We discuss how negativity can sometimes run our decision-making processes,” says Rob. “That’s a key thing that we’re focused on. We inject humor into anything we try to do. It can be thrown into our classes, our demonstrations, or even just through the halls when we see residents play cards or foosball or any of the other games we have. We’ll go over and join them so we can help spark up conversations. It makes it more homelike.”

### The Physical Dimension

Throughout life, establishing a regular workout routine has proven beneficial in a number of ways. This is no exception at Oak Park Place, as residents are invited to partake in age- and skill-appropriate

exercise classes that encourage a practical level of physical activity.

“We address our physical dimension by having routinely scheduled exercise classes for our residents to partake in,” explains Rob. “We cover different forms of yoga to improve flexibility, and strength training to help with lower back, joint issues, and body fatigue. We really focus a lot on balance training to try eliminating falls, or at least lessen the devastating impact a fall can have.”

The impact exercise has on the body is obvious, but Rob points out the benefits of mobility reap rewards in other ways as well. “It’s also incredibly mentally rewarding,” says Rob. “It helps ease some of the effects of depression and anxiety by releasing feel-good endorphins into the brain. It has a big impact on the cycle of negative thoughts and negative feelings that people can get into—especially in this day and age with what people are going through.”

### The Social Dimension

While the pandemic has necessitated adjustments, Rob says social activities remain an important part of day-to-day life at Oak Park Place. This is evidenced through such programs as trivia nights; today-in-history events; and an initiative known as Friday Flings that gives residents the opportunity to enjoy music, comedians, and storytelling as a community.

“We do what we can to create a safe and engaging atmosphere for all of our residents,” says Rob. “Our staff continues to wear masks all the time, even though everyone here is vaccinated. Even with that, we practice our social distancing at different events.”

Some of the other programs encouraging social interaction include a regular Walking Wednesdays activity and outdoor gatherings on Oak Park Place’s grounds, which Rob says are especially beneficial to the memory-care residents.

“We have a beautiful outdoor garden area that features a fountain with nice sounds of the water,” says Rob. “It gets lots of sunshine and has a great variety of trees. The residents just love being out there.”

Overall wellness isn’t just important during the pandemic. Having a strong foundation for each dimension provides a much more rewarding and fulfilling life regardless of what stage you’re experiencing and when. Thanks to thoughtful senior care facilities, many seniors are getting the most out of their later stages.

*Dave Fidlin is a freelance writer who has a special affinity for Madison. Dave’s career spans nearly 20 years, and he’s grateful for the opportunity to learn something new each day through his professional pursuits.*



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