

NEW CLASS FOR EDUCATION WEEK 2009

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Building Blocks to Emotional Wellness:

Finding Strength, Peace, and Joy - Even in Troubled Times

Mental Wellness: What It Is, How to Get It, and How to Keep It
(No Matter What Hits You!)

Physical Wellness: Strategies for Keeping Your Brain (and Body)
Healthy, Balanced, and Strong

Social Wellness: Building Positive Connections That Can Lift Your Spirits,
and Promote Health and Happiness

Spiritual Wellness: A Sure Foundation and Refuge - Drawing on the Healing,
Sustaining Power of the Savior

Mental Wellness: What It Is, How to Get It, and How to Keep It (No Matter What Hits You!)

- We live in complex, challenging times – financially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.
- The stress of our lives can often impede our sense of wellbeing, leaving us vulnerable to depression, anxiety, addiction, low self esteem, and other mental health challenges.
- All of this is according to the foreknowledge of God, who predicted through His prophets that these last days would be “perilous times” (2 Tim. 3:1) in which “men’s hearts would fail them.” (Luke 21:25-26; D&C 45:46)
- But we can learn to respond to these stresses in a way that lifts and fortifies us – rather than bringing us down. Our challenges can thereby tutor us – increasing our patience and our faith (Mosiah 23:21), and other Christlike qualities (Heb. 12:10-11).
- Even our toughest adversities can give us needed experience, and be turned for our good. (D&C 122:7; D&C 98:3; 2 Ne. 2:2) Even in our most difficult circumstances, there is a power within us that can draw strength from struggle, and transform tragedy into joyful, meaningful growth. This is evident from psychological as well as religious writings. (eg., Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*.)
- Mental wellness, though often advertised as a purchasable product, the result of the right chemical or therapeutic intervention, is much more than that. **True mental wellness emanates from within.** It is the ability to cope effectively and self-reliantly with whatever challenge we might encounter. (Boyd K. Packer, *Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord’s Own Way, Ensign, May 1978, p. 71.*)
- The attitudes we adopt, the lifestyle we choose, the influences we expose ourselves to, and the goals we set for ourselves, all have a powerful impact on our level of mental wellness.
- We can learn, from both spiritual and secular sources, what strengthens us, versus what weakens us. We can then make wise, daily choices that enhance our ability to cope, and to effectively grow from whatever conditions we might be called upon to face. (D&C 122:5, 127:2)
- Strategies for establishing, maintaining, and strengthening mental wellness include:
 - Filling one’s mind with **positive input**, not with useless or toxic material.
 - Creating a lifestyle of **creativity**, not merely consumption.
 - Building **positive perspective**, to see the big picture, not just the little picture.
- Looking for the good, maintaining an **attitude of gratitude**, is one of the most simple but powerful choices we can make, to foster mental wellness. (Thomas S. Monson, *An Attitude of Gratitude, Ensign, Feb. 2000*)

Physical Wellness: Strategies for Keeping Your Brain (and Body) Healthy, Balanced, and Strong

- Physical wellness has a direct impact on emotional wellness: When we feel good physically, we’re more likely to feel good emotionally; when we feel bad physically, we’re more likely to feel bad emotionally.
- Moreover, the brain is one of our most intricate, complex physical organs. Its proper functioning, like that of the heart and kidneys, requires the right kind of fuel, and the right kind of processes to keep it functioning effectively.
- We can learn what materials and processes impede proper brain function, and avoid them; and we can learn what materials and processes facilitate proper brain function, and embrace them as our daily chosen lifestyle.
- Such strategies include:
 - Fueling the body with **quality nourishment**, not junk (D&C 89:10-21).
 - Developing a lifestyle of **activity**, not inactivity – making physical exercise a consistent priority.
 - Providing **daily and weekly rest**, as instructed by the Creator (D&C 88:124; D&C 59:10)
- Even the finest automobile will cease to function effectively, if it is not given appropriate, consistent fuel and basic maintenance. Our brains and bodies – essential vehicles for our spirit - are no different.
- Health – including mental health – is not found simply in finding the best chemical prescription, but in consistently living the laws of health and wellness. (D&C 130:21-22)
- These simple laws, revealed in clarity by the Creator, are being confirmed more and more by science and research. We can regard these plain and simple instructions as a revealed “owner’s manual for the brain.”

Social Wellness: Building Positive Connections That Can Lift Your Spirits, and Promote Health and Happiness

- In the beginning, the Lord revealed that it is not good for man to be alone. (*Gen. 1:18.*)
- We are created as social beings. Physically and chemically, as well as emotionally and spiritually, we need one another.
- Our relationships and communication styles can be the source of our deepest, most enduring joys – or our most devastating sorrows.
- One of the signs of the times is the erosion of effective relationships. The Lord revealed, thousands of years ago, that in the latter days, the love of men would wax cold (*Matt. 24: 12*), and that a man's enemies would be those of his own household (*Matt. 10:36*). In the midst of rampant divorce, abuse, infidelity, pornography addiction, and other challenges, we see the literal fulfillment of these predictions in our day.
- Fortunately, both revealed and scientific truth can guide us in the process of building relationships that are strong, vibrant, and health-enhancing. (eg. *Dean Ornish, Love and Survival: The Scientific Basis for the Healing Power of Intimacy, 1998; Steven R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families, 1997.*)
- Such strategies include:
 - Nourishing your heart with **connections, not counterfeits** (eg. excessive media; pornography)
 - Embrace a **lifestyle of simplicity**, not over-extension.
 - **Respect, network, and synergize**, rather than compare and compete. (*1 Cor. 12:11-25*)
- One of the most powerful strategies for building effective relationships is to understand and respect the differences we exhibit as individuals. (eg. *David Keirseay and Marilyn Bates, Please Understand Me, 1984.*) We are different by design, and as we listen to and validate each other, we can strengthen, support, and learn from one another, in continuing patterns of shared growth and joy.

Spiritual Wellness: A Sure Foundation and Refuge - Drawing on the Healing, Sustaining Power of the Savior

- Throughout all the ages of human history, men have felt drawn to look to a force higher than themselves – particularly in times of trouble and conflict.
- The scriptures contain many examples of men and women looking to God as a refuge in time of trouble (*Ps. 46:1-3*), building on the sure foundation (*Hel. 5:12*) of the Savior to support them in their challenges.
- We of the latter days, in our unique challenges, can learn to look to this same Power that sustained the ancients in theirs.
- As we personalize the Savior's atonement, follow His example and teachings, and learn to receive divine direction to govern our own lives, we can find peace in the midst of the storm, and safety in the midst of a troubled world. (*D&C 19:23; John 14:27, John 16:33*)
- We can do this by:
 - **Seeking direction** from divine, not worldly, sources.
 - **Finding meaning** in our lives, and in our challenges.
 - **Anchoring our faith in Christ**, and coming unto Him.
- **The principles discussed in these classes, taken together, constitute building blocks – mental, physical, social, and spiritual - for establishing and maintaining emotional wellness.** Even in the midst of our steepest challenges, we can choose to live by these principles. We will thereby derive the inevitable blessings involved in doing so - creating a solid anchor, even in the midst of the storm.