

SUPPORTING **MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

A Toolkit for Health & Fitness Centers



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www.johnwbrickfoundation.org

INTRODUCTION

The need to address the mental health and well-being of your members and visitors has never been more important.

While mental health is not a new concern, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused increased isolation, illness, loss, and financial insecurity, has taken a serious toll on the mental health of people around the world. Current rates of stress, anxiety, depression, and other behavioral health issues have some arguing that [the next global pandemic may be poor mental health](#).

In the United States, [one in five](#) adults suffer a mental health problem, and in the European Union, it is [one in six](#). Given these numbers, it is likely you have members who are struggling. It is very likely that you or someone in your close circle of family and friends has faced a mental health challenge. The problem is that, unlike some physical ailments, poor mental health can be difficult to spot.

Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, **mental health** includes emotional, social, and psychological well-being, and can affect how a person thinks, feels, and acts. Mental health can also influence how people handle stress, interact with others, and make choices about their health.

Mental illness, while sometimes used interchangeably with the term mental health, has a different meaning. Mental illness, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, refers to diagnosable mental disorders, or conditions significantly affecting emotion, thinking, or behavior. In this toolkit, the term mental illness will be used to describe diagnosable conditions such as major depressive disorder or bipolar disorder.

“I guess the first thing was recognizing that we have been providing services that affect mental health for 45 years. We just never framed it that way before as it was not something broadly spoken about in the fitness field.”

– SUE BORESKIE, REH-FIT CENTRE





The Role of Health and Fitness Clubs

There are many barriers to mental health and well-being that the fitness industry cannot address. But this doesn't mean there aren't things we can do. Volumes of scientific evidence suggests a link between physical health and mental health and well-being, and that people experiencing mental health symptoms tend to be less active.

The fitness industry has a clear role in providing safe, supportive spaces for physical activity and exercise. Therefore there is a tremendous opportunity for engaging your members in new and deeply meaningful ways.

To help you safely and successfully explore this space, this toolkit will discuss:

- **Current knowledge and attitudes** among fitness industry professionals about mental health and the benefits of exercise for mental health.
- **Opportunities for the industry** to address mental health and well-being.
- **Current evidence on the benefits** of exercise for general mental health and well-being, as well as clinical and subclinical mental illnesses.
- **Examples of fitness industry leaders** successfully addressing mental health in their clubs, programs, and studios.

CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARD ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

In the winter of 2021, the IHRSA Foundation surveyed club and studio operators and other fitness professionals to better understand their perspectives on:

1. The role of health clubs in optimizing mental health
2. Knowledge and readiness to address mental health
3. What they are currently doing (if anything) to address mental health

In this toolkit, we summarize what we learned. For a complete report on the survey, visit ihrsafoundation.org. It is available for free.

Methods

The survey was administered to club operators and fitness professionals between November 18, 2021 and December 26, 2021. The survey was shared via email and on social media with IHRSA member clubs and affiliates, IHRSA U.S. and international partners, and John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation partners. The survey results were collected via SurveyMonkey and analyzed in Excel.

Demographics



701
SURVEY
RESPONDENTS



47.5%
OF RESPONDENTS
CAME FROM
LEADERSHIP ROLES



39.3%
OF RESPONDENTS
CAME FROM MULTI-
PURPOSE FACILITIES



Key Findings

- **Thoughts vs. actions.** There is a large disconnect between what club operators and fitness professionals think is important for them to do to address mental health and well-being, and what they actually do. This disconnect is particularly pronounced in partnering and programming. For example, three-quarters of respondents think it is important to partner with mental health professionals, but two-thirds almost never do it. Similarly, two-thirds of respondents think targeted programming is important, but only 20% offer it.
- **Confidence is key.** Club operators and fitness professionals have the most confidence in their knowledge and skills to talk about mental health and well-being in a club-based setting. However, they have the least confidence in their knowledge and skills to turn talk into action. This is particularly true of working with members with more severe mental illness, designing program content, or marketing themselves as effective in helping people address mental health through exercise.
- **A desire to learn.** Knowledge and skills can be acquired—and confidence to use them can be bolstered—with training and certification. There is a strong appetite for training and certification among respondents: almost 90% of them said they want to pursue mental health training and certification.
- **Staffing and training concerns.** Club operators and fitness professionals say that finding the right people with the right qualifications, training staff to recognize and report (when appropriate) mental health issues, and accessing ongoing training through continuing education, are barriers to entering the mental health and well-being space. They also cite concerns about working within scope of practice and liability.
- **Potential entry points.** Those seeking to move into this space view discussing the mental and physical health benefits of exercise with clients, members and prospective members as an entry point. The discussions can take place informally as part of classes or sessions, or more formally in marketing and promotional materials. Again, club operators and fitness professionals cite concerns about having the requisite training to design evidence-based program content themselves.
- **The importance of being in the mental health and wellness space is indisputable.** Despite the perceived challenges, respondents do see the importance of being in this space. They see it as a critical role for clubs, and part of building an inclusive environment within the club. They view fitness professionals playing an important role in normalizing and destigmatizing mental health. Finally, they prioritize providing integrated physical and mental health offerings as essential to helping people move along their health and wellness journeys.

If you want to learn more about this study, visit ihrsafoundation.org for details.



THE OPPORTUNITY FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FITNESS SPACE

Consumers Seeking Solutions

As awareness of mental health grows, so too does consumer demand for ways to improve it outside of medical settings. According to 2019 estimates by the Global Wellness Institute, people around the world spent a collective \$120.8 billion on self improvement, mindfulness and meditation, brain-boosting nutraceuticals and botanicals, and products and services to enhance senses, spaces, and sleep (physical activity is not included). While these are pre-pandemic figures, they suggest that people around the world are willing to invest in solutions that will help them improve their mental health and well-being.

Lack of Government and Community Investment

Yet, while individuals seem eager to spend money on mental health, businesses, agencies, and governments have historically not been as willing. According to a 2018 report from the National Council for Mental Well-being, lack of access to mental health services is a significant problem, at least in the United States, for reasons including insurance coverage, lack of providers and facilities, insufficient funding, lack of awareness, and social stigma.

According to a United Nations policy statement, “This historic underinvestment in mental health needs to be redressed without delay to reduce immense suffering among hundreds of millions of people and mitigate long-term social and economic costs to society.”

As awareness of
mental health grows,
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medical settings.

Numbers support the UN's assertion. Both the human and societal costs of poor mental health are high. According to a 2018 report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the estimated cost of poor mental health to the global economy was \$2.5 trillion in 2010; this number is expected to reach \$6 trillion by 2030.





Looking to Clubs for Help

While investments in mental health infrastructure are largely outside the purview of the business community, businesses (and specifically health and fitness businesses) have clear roles to play in addressing mental health. Below are several examples of how health clubs can support mental health in their everyday operations.

- **Efforts to make *all* members feel welcome** and connected to the club's community can help address loneliness and social isolation.
- **Evidence-based mind-body offerings** such as yoga, tai chi, or meditation can support members coping with anxiety or stress. They can also appeal to those seeking lower-intensity exercise options.
- **Positive, empowering messaging** throughout the facility can set a supportive tone while also supporting members who may face mental health challenges related to body image or disordered eating.
- **Supporting training** of one or more fitness professionals at the club in mental health-informed fitness training.
- **Representative and diverse marketing imagery**, including photos of different ethnicities, ages, and body types, can signal a welcoming environment, foster connections, and support positive and empowering messages.

REMEMBER: *mental health and well-being, similar to physical fitness, cannot be attained in one visit to your club, studio, or facility. Rather it is built over weeks and months of consistent effort.*

It is helpful to think about mental health and well-being in a similar way. Getting and staying mentally healthy is an ongoing, often winding, journey, but fitness centers and studios can provide the stability, social support, knowledge, and encouragement needed to help support mental health and well-being.



THE SCIENCE OF EXERCISE AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

As a fitness professional, you know from experience how moving one's body can positively impact one's life. You have seen how easily a great spin class or a 30-minute walk or run on the treadmill can improve a member's mood and even change the course of their day.

As it turns out, there is science happening behind what you witness every day. This section focuses on the scientific research supporting physical activity and exercise, and how clubs can support their members' mental well-being.

Stress and Anxiety

Several studies have shown that physical activity and exercise can help alleviate stress in several ways. First, exercise releases endorphins, or "feel good" chemicals, that affect mood and behavior and often trigger positive feelings. Second, exercise can also mimic the effects of meditation because it can provide a way to focus the mind. Studies show that after 20-30 minutes of aerobic exercise, people tend to feel calmer than they did before exercising, and for several hours afterward.

Evidence also suggests that physical activity and exercise help improve symptoms of anxiety and anxiety disorders. In 2018, [a team of international researchers](#) found that 1) people who are more active may be less likely to have anxiety disorders, and 2) exercise can reduce symptoms of anxiety disorders. In 2014, [a study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine](#) found that physical activity was effective as a supplemental treatment for anxiety disorders, but was not as effective as antidepressant medications.

Depression

Studies have also shown physical activity and exercise to be beneficial for depression. A 2018 review published in the [American Journal of Psychiatry](#) found people with higher physical activity levels were less likely to have depression, and that physical activity helped prevent depression in young people and seniors regardless of where they live. (Speaking of youth, in 2020 [researchers in Germany](#) found that exercise can effectively lower depression symptoms in young people). Finally, another study published in the [Korean Journal of Family Medicine](#) found that people with higher physical activity levels saw a lower risk for depressive moods, especially among people with chronic health conditions.



Mood and Happiness

In addition to helping improve symptoms of mental health challenges, physical activity has also been associated with better mood, happiness, and quality of life.

A review of studies published in the [*Journal of Psychology*](#) found that 10–30 minutes worth of exercise was enough to boost a person's mood, while [researchers in Taiwan](#) found that people of all ages who were moderately or very physically active had significantly higher happiness and life satisfaction scores compared to their less active peers.

Meanwhile, a study published in the [*International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*](#) found a positive association between physical activity and happiness among children and adolescents ages 8–17.

Finally, studies in [Brazil](#) and [England](#) found that people who were more physically active reported having better health and better quality of life.



Barriers to Physical Activity

Despite the many benefits of physical activity for mental health, those suffering from a mental health condition may find it hard to exercise regularly. For example, depression may make it harder for people to do things that they normally enjoy. A 2017 review in [Mental Health and Physical Activity](#) found that low mood, lack of energy, and fatigue were commonly cited barriers to physical activity in adults with depression.

Also, some studies show that while exercise can make people with anxiety feel better in certain ways, it may also exacerbate anxious feelings. For example, respondents in [a 2019 study published in Mental Health and Physical Activity](#), said that despite the positive impact exercise had on their anxiety, exercising, or thinking about exercising, could cause more anxiety (and even lead to exercise avoidance). Respondents said they feared taking time away from other responsibilities, looking foolish in front of others, and experiencing physical discomfort during exercise.

Meanwhile, when asked what helps them invest in exercise, respondents said support from friends, family, and group exercise classes, and having the time and money to invest. If one of these factors was missing, coupled with doubts about the efficacy of exercise on anxiety, respondents said they were more likely to avoid exercise.

This evidence suggests that people with anxiety and depression encounter the same barriers to physical activity as most people, but that they may also have a few unique challenges posed by their mental health. It is helpful for fitness professionals to be aware of these barriers so they can help to reduce them. For example, providing a welcoming, inclusive, and judgment-free environment can help people with anxiety feel more at ease.

This evidence suggests that people with anxiety and depression encounter the same barriers to physical activity as most people, but that they may also have a few unique challenges posed by their mental health.

You may also want to consider specific programming. In the study cited above, people with anxiety preferred longer, lower intensity activities because it gave them more time to “zone out” and not think about their anxiety. Recognizing that depression is associated with low energy can also be helpful when trainers or exercise instructors program for that population.

For a deeper dive, the John W. Brick Foundation’s [“Move Your Mental Health”](#) report highlights the research evidence for the benefits of individual physical activity and exercise modalities for mental health and well-being.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMID MENTAL ILLNESS

When it comes to serious mental illness, physical activity plays less of a direct role in treatment. However, in some cases exercise can still offer important benefits and can complement medical, behavioral, and pharmacological treatments. This section focuses on how physical activity can help people with serious mental illness.

Bipolar Disorder and Schizophrenia

Limited evidence exists on the benefits of physical activity and exercise for the management of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Evidence compiled in the John W. Brick Foundation's "[Move Your Mental Health](#)" report suggests exercise may help reduce some negative symptoms such as apathy and withdrawal, but not other symptoms like hallucinations or delusions.

Major Depressive Disorder

In 2018, researchers published a review of studies in [European Psychiatry](#) that found consistent evidence that physical activity can improve symptoms of depression, and that effects are comparable to other treatments, including antidepressants and therapy. In 2020 [researchers in New Zealand](#) also found consistent evidence that physical activity can reduce symptoms of depression in young people, adults, and older adults.

Substance Use Disorder

Exercise also shows promise for people with substance use disorders. [A 2014 meta-analysis of 22 studies](#) showed physical activity increased abstinence, reduced withdrawal symptoms, and reduced anxiety and depression. Another review, published in the [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#), found physical activity, including mind-body and physical fitness programs, improved mental health, quality of life, and lessened cravings.

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Inclusion in a Comprehensive Treatment Plan

Overall, exercise can be a valuable addition to a comprehensive treatment plan for a mental illness. The same 2020 New Zealand study mentioned above also found that exercise showed benefits for people with:

- Anxiety
- Bipolar disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Eating disorders, including anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Depression, including pre- and post-natal depression
- Substance use disorders

In addition, physical activity and exercise are known to improve cardiometabolic health and quality of life, which benefit people with serious mental illness regardless of the impacts on their specific mental health diagnosis.

A Fitness Club's Role

- **Fitness centers are not expected to take the place of therapists, psychiatrists, or clinically necessary medications.** But they can provide important complementary treatments that can benefit other aspects of physical and mental health. These include:
- **A safe, supportive environment** that is explicitly welcoming of all people. This can be cultivated through marketing and messaging, training of staff, and elevating fitness professionals who have experience in mental health.
- **Social interaction and a sense of community** through group classes, special events, and more. Evidence suggests social support may be an important facilitator to exercise for people with anxiety.
- **Variety of equipment, class, spaces, and exercise options** to support a wide range of fitness preferences and ability levels.
- **Classes and programs specifically designed** to address stress and anxiety, and promote mindfulness. Activities like yoga or tai chi may benefit people with anxiety when incorporated one or two times per week.

LEADS TO FOLLOW

If addressing mental health and well-being in your club, studio, or program is new territory for you, take a page from the book of eight operators and professionals who are already on the path.

They range from just getting started to implementing and iterating on successful programs. They also represent a diverse range of facilities, from fitness franchisees to yoga studios to medically integrated fitness centers. So whether you are a club operator just beginning to consider moving into the mental health and well-being space, or you have been working in this space for years, these case studies contain helpful advice for you.

Key Themes

You will notice a few key themes across all of the case studies:

1. Opportunity

Providing programs that address mental health and well-being is a significant opportunity for the industry. There is untapped consumer demand for this type of programming.

“[W]hen when we first started Healthy365, we were very focused on physical health. It was more about getting people the right food, understanding how to encourage them to be more active, to want to use our trails, to want to get out and go to the gym or to stay consistent with their trainer. We continue to engage individuals in physical health improvement while also having the mindset that physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual health are connected. When we included mental health as a focused priority, it was primarily because it was the identified priority of our community.”

– AMANDA EVERIDGE, HANCOCK REGIONAL HOSPITAL

2. Integrated Programs

Clubs can offer integrated physical and mental health programs focused on nutrition, exercise, sleep, and stress reduction. They can also offer stand-alone programs that are focused specifically on mental health and well-being issues like work-life balance, resilience, or gratitude.

3. Well-being Programs

Clubs can develop mental health and well-being programs in-house if they have the appropriate expertise on staff, and can invest in training one or more staff members. They can also access outside resources from experts knowledgeable about the health and fitness industry and mental health, including turnkey programming.

4. Credentials

Fitness professionals who have the appropriate credentials, skills and expertise are needed to staff the programs. There is a shortage of appropriate education and training, and clubs have resorted to creating their own in-house training materials.

5. Basic Understanding

Fitness professionals are expected to have a basic understanding of mental health and well-being, the link to physical activity, appropriate language, and assessment tools. They are not expected to be mental health experts, and must work within their scope of practice.

6. Referral Network

A referral network is critical to support fitness professionals when issues presented by clients and members lie outside their scope of practice. Clubs can partner with healthcare providers and allied health professionals to establish a referral network.

“If you want to highlight the importance of mental well-being and become more holistic, then it is critical to educate yourself on the continuum of mental health and well-being. We know physical activity and medical fitness interventions can contribute to mental well-being, but it is important to make the distinction that exercise is not meant to replace mental health treatment. We have a framework in place to refer clients to mental health professionals when a client’s needs are beyond our scope.

– SUE BORESKIE OF REH-FIT

7. Assessments

Programs that incorporate baseline and post-program assessments help participants assess changes in mood, energy, anxiety, and quality of life. Assessment tools also help clubs assess program success and implement continuous quality improvements.

“We have a variety of different tools that we use that provide an understanding of where people are currently at. This gives us the ability to assess and evaluate outcome measures down the road. Perhaps equally important, these tools provide our staff information they can utilize to facilitate the process of guiding individuals to discover and create their own wellness vision, identify associated challenges and barriers and prepare strategies to overcome those barriers as they occur.”

– BRAD ROY OF LOGAN HEALTH



NATIONAL FITNESS PARTNERS

JohnPaul Bennett | Corporate Sales Manager

Overview

National Fitness Partners is a Planet Fitness franchisee that owns and operates Planet Fitness locations in five states. They provide affordable health club access to patients completing treatment or therapy and were referred by their healthcare providers; to date, 800 referred patients have participated.

How it was Developed

It was developed as part of ongoing partnerships with healthcare providers who had a program in place for employees, and who were seeking physical and mental health solutions for patients coming out of treatment and therapy.

How it's Marketed

It is marketed to healthcare providers and the general public as a great way to remove cost barriers for people who may benefit from adding exercise to their physical and mental health and wellness journey.

How it's Staffed

Trainers work with referred patients to provide equipment and facility orientation and set goals; they do not explicitly address mental health and have no specialty certifications or training in mental health.

Measuring Success

Success is measured by whether healthcare providers adopt it as a referral pathway, and whether patients use it and then join as new members.

Partnering for Success

National Fitness Partners partners with three hospitals and one therapy practice for referrals, and they have plans to partner with mental health practitioners.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"[I]f you implement these programs, it actually will impact your bottom line. But at the same time, you're also going to be really helping people on this mental health journey. And it's a great way to kind of connect physical health and mental health, so you can do both, you can still drive revenue."



LIVE WELL EXERCISE CLINIC

Sara Hodson | President & CEO

Overview

LIVE WELL Exercise Clinic provides supervised, small group exercise programs that incorporate mental health and social health. They have 20 locations across Canada.

How it was Developed

The programs were developed to meet the needs of patients with specific health conditions (for example, diabetes management, blood pressure management) and have evolved to be holistic, integrated physical, mental, and social health solutions.

How it's Marketed

Solutions are marketed to healthcare providers and the general public as overseen by experts who can tailor their instruction to a participant's needs and are supported by a like-minded community of individuals seeking happy, active lives.

How it's Staffed

Solutions are provided by clinical exercise physiologists, who receive in-house training including education modules in mental health and well-being.

Measuring Success

Participants assess their mood and energy before and after each session and document and share "wins" after each session.

Partnering for Success

LIVE WELL Exercise Clinic began as a healthcare provider-supported community, with patients referred for a wide variety of health conditions. The clinics continue to receive referrals from health care providers and work with them to document patient progress.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"[W]e make it really, really clear to them that exercise is a treatment modality, I mean that's where we have a ton of evidence around depression and as little as 10 minutes of movement, and having people to really understand that. ... So literally just even asking every session, rate your mood and your energy before exercise and after exercise, and having somebody start to move from just identifying, even if their mood was really low, that it got a little bit better, and then their mood starts to get better and better and better before exercise. And having somebody understand the impact that it's making on their quality of sleep by having that conversation."



LPY YOGA & BARRE, THE GRATITUDE ADJUSTMENT

Jillian McDonough and Lorraine Shedoudi | Co-Owners

Program Overview

LPY Yoga & Barre, with three studio locations in the Boston metro area and online, provides a 12-week “Gratitude Adjustment” program addressing physical and mental health with movement classes and workshops, meditations, and webinars.

How it was Developed

It was developed using a mix of tools and concepts from neuroscience, positive psychology, and meditation and mindfulness. They paid particular attention to habits and patterns, meditation and movement, and community and connection.

How it's Marketed

It is marketed to the general public as a program that provides community support and tools for gratitude, self-care, and overall happiness and well-being.

How it's Staffed

The owners, who have backgrounds in teaching yoga and substance use disorder and addiction counseling, run the program, and they envision training program graduates as coaches and mentors to assist with future programming.

Measuring Success

Participants are provided trackers and self-assessments, including a happiness assessment that captures pre- and post happiness levels; program success is also measured by participation and retention.

Partnering for Success

LPY Yoga & Barre does not have formal partnerships with healthcare providers, but the company recognizes the importance of working within their scope of practice and referring people to healthcare providers and allied health professionals when needed.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

“[W]e work with mental health issues, but we’re not promoting this idea that we’re mental health counselors. We’re exploring things and talking about them, and finding ways that you can find solutions, and we are happy to refer if it is outside our scope.”



REH-FIT CENTRE

Sue Boreskie | CEO

Overview

Reh-Fit Centre, a certified medical fitness facility in Winnipeg, Canada, provides a wide range of evidence-based, medically integrated programming to promote health to people with or at risk for chronic conditions.

How it was Developed

A new program for cardiovascular risk reduction for women is under development in partnership with the Province of Manitoba and Victoria General Hospital Foundation; it will place more emphasis on mental health and well-being than any previous programming, and will be delivered virtually through individual and group coaching sessions over a 12-month period.

How it's Marketed

Promotion and marketing is under development and will likely convey holistic messages about heart health prevention for women, with a strong emphasis on stress and anxiety reduction and improving quality of life.

How it's Staffed

It will be staffed by professionals with training in wellness coaching and lifestyle behavior change and who can refer to affiliated mental health professionals.

Measuring Success

The program will include physical health assessments as well as mental health assessments, including a pre- and post-mental well-being score.

Partnering for Success

Reh-Fit Centre has a medical advisor and a medical advisory board that advises on programs and their outcomes. They also advise on Reh-Fit Centre's collaborations with healthcare providers and allied health professionals for referrals.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"I guess the first thing was recognizing that we have been providing services that affect mental health for 45 years. We just never framed it that way before as it was not something broadly spoken about in the fitness field."



WE TALK WELLBEING

Dr. Glenda Rivoallan | Founder

Overview

We Talk Wellbeing, an online coaching program, provides personal and corporate programs and inspirational content focused on four well-being pillars: fitness, nutrition, mindset, and health.

How it was Developed

We Talk Wellbeing was originally developed within the four walls of a health club, but eventually the lifestyle, stress reduction, and resilience programs evolved to be delivered online.

How it's Marketed

Workshops, courses, and coaching are marketed to corporations, organizations, and individuals as focused on supporting positive behavior change in mental and physical health and employee work-life balance.

How it's Staffed

Programs are provided by credentialed and degreed health and wellness experts, and fitness professionals who are trained in Mental Health First Aid.

Measuring Program Success

Participants assess their happiness and resilience with pre- and post-program self-assessments.

Partnering for Success

We Talk Wellbeing practices and advocates for the health and fitness industry by collaborating with mental health specialists, public health specialists, physical therapists, chiropractors, and kinesiologists.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"I really do feel like people need to be working with people that really know what they're doing. So about making sure they look at the credentials of the collaboration that they're about to embark on, making sure that they do collaborate with good mental health professionals, also feel like there's some great resources out there."



LOGAN HEALTH MEDICAL FITNESS CENTER, JOURNEY TO WELLNESS

Dr. Brad Roy | Director

Overview

Logan Health Medical Fitness Center (formerly The Summit) is a medically integrated health and fitness center in Montana that provides a range of programming and services, including its Journey to Wellness program.

How it was Developed

The program was developed based on a whole health coaching model, and continues to be refined over time. It's a 12-week individualized coaching program that focuses on goal setting, nutrition, strength and endurance training, stress reduction, and work-life balance.

How it's Marketed

It is marketed to the general public as helping people of all ages and abilities establish long-term healthy habits. It is also marketed to healthcare providers who want to refer patients with arthritis, cancer, cardiac disease, chronic pain, depression, anxiety, diabetes, fibromyalgia, hyperlipidemia, hypertension, obesity, orthopedic issues, and pre-diabetes.

How it's Staffed

It is staffed by certified health and wellness providers and coaches, including healthcare providers, clinical exercise physiologists, dietitians, personal trainers, and licensed social workers.

Measuring Success

A range of tools are used to assess mental health and well-being, including depression, anxiety, and quality of life, before and after the program.

Partnering for Success

The facility is located on the Logan Health Medical Center campus, and it has a physician advisory committee that includes primary care physicians, orthopedic surgeons, cardiologists, endocrinologists, pediatric specialists, and psychiatrists. The committee provides guidance for programming and promotes programs to other physicians and clinics for referrals.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"The key strategy is to guide each individual toward discovering where they want to go, and to develop and begin to pursue their own wellness vision based on their current status and where their confidence and ability levels are. While they may not initially pursue the health issue at hand, they will at some point move in that direction as their confidence increases. The program leverages the art of coaching, which is very different from medical care and mental health counseling, when often you're telling people what they need to do."



HANCOCK REGIONAL HOSPITAL, THE HEALTHY365 INITIATIVE

Amanda Everidge | Director of Community Health Improvement

Overview

The Healthy365 Initiative is a Hancock Regional Hospital community outreach department that connects community residents to mental health services, including referrals to the Hancock Wellness Centers' three locations in Indiana, and other fitness facilities and professionals for physical activity as part of overall care.

How it was Developed

The initiative was developed as a whole health approach to improve the health status of individuals who live, work, learn, play, and pray within Hancock County.

How it's Marketed

The initiative is promoted as getting people connected to the resources, supports, and opportunities that they need to live a happy, healthy life, while also focusing on a whole health approach to address health challenges.

How it's Staffed

The initiative is led by a licensed social worker, and Wellness Center professionals are trained in QPR (Question Persuade Refer) or suicide prevention training, and Mental Health First Aid.

Measuring Success

Physical health improvements are measured with pre- and post-assessments, and mental health improvements are measured by patient engagement.

Partnering for Success

The Healthy365 Initiative and the Hancock Wellness Centers are both owned by Hancock Regional Hospital, facilitating collaboration and communication. Also, the Healthy365 Connection Center is a provider that can directly refer patients to Wellness Center physician referral programs.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"When someone calls here to the Connection Center, we talk to them about their anxiety their depression, and how they've not felt like themselves. Maybe they've been isolating, maybe they've been on medication. So we're looking at how to get them mental health support, but we're also asking about their diet, their levels of physical activity. So we can look at the whole picture and say, 'well, this might be an opportunity here.' An opportunity to get them more active and creating natural endorphins."



COMPLETE HARMONY

Melissa Dierker | Owner

Overview

Complete Harmony, a yoga studio in St. Louis, Missouri, provides trauma-informed yoga and mindfulness programs and services.

How it was Developed

It uses a trauma-informed approach to meeting the needs of youth ages 18 months to 18 years, and is delivered in studio or virtually.

How it's Marketed

It is marketed as a safe and inclusive space for youth who have experienced trauma, or who have mental health needs, to connect with themselves and the world through yoga and mindfulness.

How it is Staffed

It was developed and led by a social worker and an apprentice teacher, who both have yoga teacher and Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga certifications.

Measuring Success

Success is measured by youth engagement and retention and self-reported assessment of safety, body and emotional awareness and self-regulation.

Partnering for Success

Complete Harmony partners with healthcare providers, including pediatricians, therapists, and psychologists, for referrals, as well as community-based organizations and schools.

LESSONS LEARNED | ADVICE

"I always say that our services are a complement to therapy, and never are meant to replace therapy. That is never the goal... And I think also mental health professionals like that it's a wraparound service. I'm not providing something that you do, I'm providing an addition to what you do."

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Not sure how to gauge a member's mental health or well-being? Try using the following assessment tools that were created by leading scientific researchers. A great way to use these is to ask the client to answer these questions for themselves, and then talk through their answers together. In other words, the client completes the measures, and shares the questions and answers with you, rather than turning in any forms or taking any online surveys.

Quality of Life

The RAND Corporation developed [SF-36 Health Survey](#), a 36-question survey that measures quality of life. If 36 questions feels like a lot, you can use the shorter [12-question version of the survey](#).

Depression

[Patient Health Questionnaire-9](#) was developed at Columbia University, and is used as an instrument for screening, monitoring and measuring depression.

Anxiety

[General Anxiety Disorder-7](#) was created by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke and colleagues, with an educational grant from Pfizer Inc., and is used as an instrument for measuring anxiety.

Overall Mental Health

National Institutes of Health [Patient Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System](#) (PROMIS). PROMIS includes short forms for both adults and children to assess a number of mental health outcomes including:

- Physical functioning
- Emotional distress
- Fatigue
- Global Health



Goal Setting

Goal setting and evaluation planning are the first steps in designing a program. Goals for the program should take into account what is reasonable to achieve, and what can be measured. Using the **acronym S.M.A.R.T.** to set intentions can be an effective strategy for goal setting. S.M.A.R.T. goals are:

Specific, what will be achieved and by whom?

Measurable, how will the desired outcome be assessed with the tools and resources at hand at the fitness center, or the client's fitness tracker/phone?

Attainable, what is reasonable within the constraints of the program and setting?

Relevant will participants and staff see the program as useful and important?

Time-bound, over what specific time period (usually the duration of the program) will the goal be achieved?

S.M.A.R.T. goal setting can be used to identify the larger program goal as well as program objectives.

The CDC provides a [helpful template](#) for setting S.M.A.R.T. goals and objectives.



MEASURING PROGRESS AND EVALUATING OUTCOMES

There are several ways to measure progress and evaluate outcomes. These include:

- **Validated questionnaires**, including the assessment tools referenced above. Be aware of privacy issues with sensitive information. You might consider collaborating with a researcher at a local university, or making responses anonymous.
- **Subjective assessments** of improvement, in which participants are asked if they think the program has improved their symptoms, has been effective, or has met their expectations.
- **Satisfaction/quality assessments** to gauge whether participants enjoyed the program and would repeat it or recommend it to others.

To assess program efficacy, it is recommended that fitness centers use a validated questionnaire or subjective assessment, in addition to any quality or satisfaction assessments. Questions should focus on outcomes related to the original goals set at the start of the program.

The [RAND](#) Corporation developed a resource “Evaluation Approaches for Mental Health Prevention and Early Intervention Programs” providing helpful tools for planning and evaluating programs addressing mental health which can be adapted for physical activity programs.



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To learn more about the John W. Brick Mental Health Foundation, visit johnwbrickfoundation.org.



About the IHRSA Foundation

The IHRSA Foundation's mission is to promote health through exercise.

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