

Wellness: Caring for Self in Transition

Spiritual, Physical, Mental,
Emotional, and Social Well-Being
for Leaders Experiencing Change



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Wellness: Caring for Self in Transition - 1

Fresh  Start

Talking Points

Change can be an exciting time for people in congregations, and it can also be a time of stress. Given the “busy-ness” of transition time, self care can become less of a priority, and our vulnerability to dis-ease increases when we don’t take care of ourselves.

What does it mean to “be well”?



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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Wellness is a word that can mean different things to people. While this module focuses on a variety of aspects of wellness, it is important for you to consider your own definition. Quickly jot down ten words that would complete this sentence:

When I am feeling really well, I feel...

After a few minutes, ask the participants to share their lists and capture the responses on a flip chart. Use a “round-robin” technique, with each person giving one answer, and the next adding one that is different from his/her list and continue until all responses are on the board.

How many of you came up with common feelings? Different ones?

Wellness: Our relationship with our own welfare ...

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Talking Points

On a scale of 1-10, with one being not at all, and 10 being extremely well, how would you rate your “relationship with your welfare”?

Draw a scale from 1-10 on a flip chart and make an “x” for each response along the scale.



External changes can have significant internal effects

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

What changes have you noticed during this transition? Have you started doing something new to take care of yourself, or have you stopped doing something that you did before your transition?

What changes have you experienced in the way you order your lives in your new position?

Facilitate a general discussion.

Consider Five Areas of Well-Being:

Spiritual
Physical
Mental
Emotional
Relational

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Fresh  Start

Talking Points

This module invites you into an examination of and reflection upon your well-being, considering five primary areas: Spiritual, Physical, Mental, Emotional and Relational. Let's look at each in turn.

Spiritual Well-Being



Consider your spiritual life and practice ...

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

When seeing to the spiritual needs of others, it is easy to cut ourselves short of what we need to maintain our own spiritual well being. It is important to assess how well (or poorly in some cases) we care for ourselves, especially in times of change.

Consider the spiritual life. What does it mean to be spiritually healthy?

Distribute Handout 1, inviting participants to take 20-30 minutes to consider the questions, making journal notes if helpful or desired.

**“God, grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot
change, the courage to change
the things I can, and the wisdom
to know the difference ...”**

Reinhold Niebuhr

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Fresh  Start

Talking Points

One spiritual tip:

Pray the serenity prayer three times a day for two weeks, and journal about the result.

This prayer can help us organize what we can and cannot control. It may help to write down two columns on a piece of paper – Column A is that we cannot change, column B is what we can. Usually column B is a very short list – “me”!

Physical Well-Being



Consider your physical health ...

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Stress in transition can come from many directions. Changes in climate, neighborhood, daily routine, and scheduling can take the focus away from taking care of self. Consider your own physical well-being and what you do (or don't do) to take care of your body.

Distribute Handout 2, inviting participants to take 20-30 minutes to consider the questions, making journal notes if helpful or desired.

- **Walk a mile**
- **Take a shower**
- **Get some sleep**
- **Eat some broccoli**



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Talking Points

One physical tip:

David Wilcox, a folk singer in North Carolina, once wrote a song titled, “Down Inside Yourself.” In it he recommends that when we are feeling down there are some physical things we can do that might cast out the “blues” we feel when we are stressed. These are his physical remedies. Try them before you give in to the “down-ness inside yourself.” Here are some more simple tips:

Increase your intake of:

- Garlic
- Olive oil (not exposed to high temps)
- Tomatoes
- Raw (not roasted) nuts (kept in the refrigerator to preserve oils)
- Pomegranate (fruit or unsweetened fruit juice)

Decrease your intake of

- Trans-fats
- Refined Sugars
- Dextrose corn syrups and sweeteners in foods and beverages
- Processed food with long lists of ingredients you cannot pronounce

Mental Well-Being



Consider your thoughts and priorities ...

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Mental well-being involves the way we order our lives, the time we give ourselves to think and process, the way we handle stresses, the way we organize our time, and how we have fun. Consider your own mental health.

Distribute Handout 3, inviting participants to take 20-30 minutes to consider the questions, making journal notes if helpful or desired.

**What three good things happened
to me today?**

What brought them about?

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Talking Points

One mental tip:

Every evening for a week, make a list of three good things that happened that day and what brought them about. Journal about the implications.

Emotional Well-Being



Consider your emotional state ...

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Emotional health involves an understanding of how the activities and challenges of life affect our feelings. The larger your repertoire of responses is, the better you can handle stress. Cori Ten Boom said once that “worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrow – it empties today of strength.” Being emotionally centered helps put worries aside so that our minds are clear for doing what we CAN do to deal with difficult situations – in our own lives and in the lives of those we serve.

Distribute Handout 4, inviting participants to take 20-30 minutes to consider the questions, making journal notes if helpful or desired.

**Once a week do something
that puts you in touch with
your creativity.**

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Talking Points

Emotional Tip:

Once a week participate in a creative or entertaining activity – reading, watching a movie, drawing, writing, poetry, journaling, painting, cooking, photography, music. Make sure that whatever you choose has nothing to do with sermon preparation, teaching or any other practical application!

Relational Well-Being



Consider your relationships ...

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Talking Points

Jonathan Haidt, professor of psychology at the University of California-Riverside, who is one of the originators of what has come to be known as the “happiness formula,” performed a study to show the difference between pleasures and gratifications to his first year psychology students. He assigned his students four activities:

- attend a lecture
- perform an act of kindness
- express gratitude to someone
- eat an ice cream cone

The only activity that failed to lift the mood of the students was the eating of the ice cream cone!

Haidt says, “The way I look at it, we are an ultra social species: we evolved to live in intensely social groups. We are most fully engaged in life when we are a part of something that isn’t just for ourselves.”

Distribute Handout 5, inviting participants to take 20-30 minutes to consider the questions, making journal notes if helpful or desired.

**Thank someone from your
past by writing a letter of
gratitude, and deliver it in
person...**

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Talking Points

Relational tip:

Write a letter of thanks to someone from your past who has been particularly kind to you, but who has never been properly thanked. Then, if possible, deliver the letter in person.

Develop Strategies for Health:

Rule of life

Retreat

Spiritual Direction

Support/Colleague
Group

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Fresh Start 

Talking Points

Let's take the time to synthesize what has come up through your reflections. Working together in pairs, take what you have done on your handouts, turn to a partner, and share any insights or implications for action that have come to you during these exercises. Commit to spending some effort in the next month on two or three things, and arrange for a "check-in" with your partner. This may involve a phone call, an e-mail or a visit together. Focus on two or three things for which you need accountability, and exchange contact information or set a date for a meeting to make this follow-up happen.

Offer Fresh Start participants resources, such as:

- ***A list of local and regional retreat centers, providing website information and brochures, if available. Are there spiritual directors onsite? Is financial aid/scholarship available?***
- ***A list of local spiritual directors, Episcopal and non-Episcopal, with telephone numbers and reference list***
- ***A list of reliable local therapists***
- ***A list of gyms, fitness centers and personal trainers, with reference list***
- ***Information about local deanery/clericus/colleague group meetings***
- ***More information about health assessment and wellness (see resource section)***

Show up

Pay attention

Tell the truth

Don't get attached to a specific result

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

It has been said that there are four steps to leading a centered, non-anxious life:

- Show up
- Pay Attention
- Tell the truth
- Don't get attached to the result

Choose a gesture that you do several times a day (for example, picking up the phone or stopping at a stoplight) and let it become an invitation to wake up, an action which reminds you of the presence of God. This is the moment that God has made. Can we give each moment our full attention?

Let Us Pray



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Talking Points

Don't spend the entire time talking ABOUT prayer. Spend some time praying. Praying in silence – IN COMMUNITY – can be a very powerful experience.

You may want to ask participants to talk about their experience of silent prayer in community, if the trust level of the group is high. If you sense that it is not, then go on to the prayer time. Spend some quiet, unhurried time praying as a group.

Praying for each other during our Fresh Start time together is a way of supporting ourselves. What might we pray for each other in the time between our sessions?

Facilitate a discussion of what people would like the others to pray for them and capture the list on a flip chart, asking people to jot it down in their journals. Be sure and follow up on pastoral concerns that may have arisen during the session.