

PERSONAL WELLNESS HANDBOOK

.....
*Striving to practice wellness & stand
in our power as VISTAs*



Campus Compact
New York & Pennsylvania

*Created by Mary
Sherman*



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REFLECTION TOOL



CREATED BY MARY SHERMAN



VISTA
Volunteers in Service to America

WELLNESS DEFINED

Basic Needs sits at the foundation of wellness, as all other dimensions of wellness cannot flourish without the security of survival.

Wellness is the practice of actively becoming aware of your personal health through all dimensions of wellness.

Wellness is more than not having a cold or exercising, it is the incorporation of techniques that promote positive change and growth for a fulfilled life. In this handbook, we explore the Eight Dimensions of Wellness, highlighting various ways everyone can move towards personal wellness.

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness are: basic needs, physical, social, emotional, occupational, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental. You can constantly strive to achieve your highest personal wellness by understanding how to maintain and optimize each of the dimensions of wellness, all of which can be supplemented by easy practices that you incorporate into your every day routine. Basic Needs sits at the foundation of wellness, as all other dimensions of wellness cannot flourish without the security of survival.

Throughout your life, navigating wellness might not be a priority, especially in a busy, chaotic world. Incorporating culturally-relevant wellness into our personal lives, specifically efforts to address our basic needs, will help to guide us and our communities towards a more fulfilling life. The concept of wellness is often seen as a white-washed version of self-care meant for only those who can afford scented candles and bath bombs. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) disproportionately experience psychological distress due to socioeconomic disparities, such as food & housing insecurity. Socioeconomic disparities are the result of a long-withstanding history of racism and oppression in the United States. **This guide argues that wellness is for everyone, recognizing that it is a unique experience for each individual & community.** This is a working guide, and is subject to change as better practices become understood.

The information in this guide can be attributed to the work of Black, Indigenous, & People of Color who have been leading wellness work for centuries.

WELLNESS ILLUSTRATED

The imagery of a tree is used to represent the ever-evolving nature of wellness. Basic needs sit at the root of the tree, acting as the foundation for which a person can live. The leaves nourish the tree and help it grow stronger, just as the other 7 Dimensions nourish our wellbeing to promote a higher form of personal wellness. The 8 Dimensions of Wellness work in unison, and it is imperative to nurture each dimension to lead a fulfilling, sustainable life.



BASIC NEEDS WELLNESS



What is Basic Needs Wellness?

An often overlooked, but fundamental, dimension of wellness is an individual's basic needs for survival. Traditionally, basic needs encompassed food, water, and shelter, but now go beyond to include clothing, sanitation, education, and healthcare.

The fulfillment of basic needs is the foundation of wellness, as this is where all other dimensions may be able to flourish. In the US, basic needs are dependent on financial security, which BIPOC have historically been barred from. We must deviate from the belief that people experience poverty because of laziness or unluckiness, and that poverty is in fact the result of centuries of systemic barriers causing mass inequities in all sectors.

Tips for Basic Needs Wellness as a VISTA

- 1) Apply for SNAP, making sure you download the Public Benefit Disregard Letter in your [MyAmericorps](#) portal
- 2) Sign up for [healthcare](#); apply for Medicaid and sign up for the [IMG Healthcare Allowance Plan](#)
- 3) Create a [detailed budget](#) for yourself to help allocate funds towards rent, school, food, and any other activities
- 4) If you have student loans, apply for forbearance or an Income-Based Payment Plan. Your payments could be as low as \$0/month
- 5) Speak to your Site Supervisor or VISTA Leader about any challenges you are encountering relating to your basic needs

Where to find Basic Needs Wellness Resources

- [NY Government Benefits Application](#) | [PA Government Benefits Application](#)
- [CCNYPA 20-21 Resource Folder](#), [Benefits Guides Subfolder](#)
- [Resource Sharing List](#), Financial Security, Food Access, & Government Benefits Tab

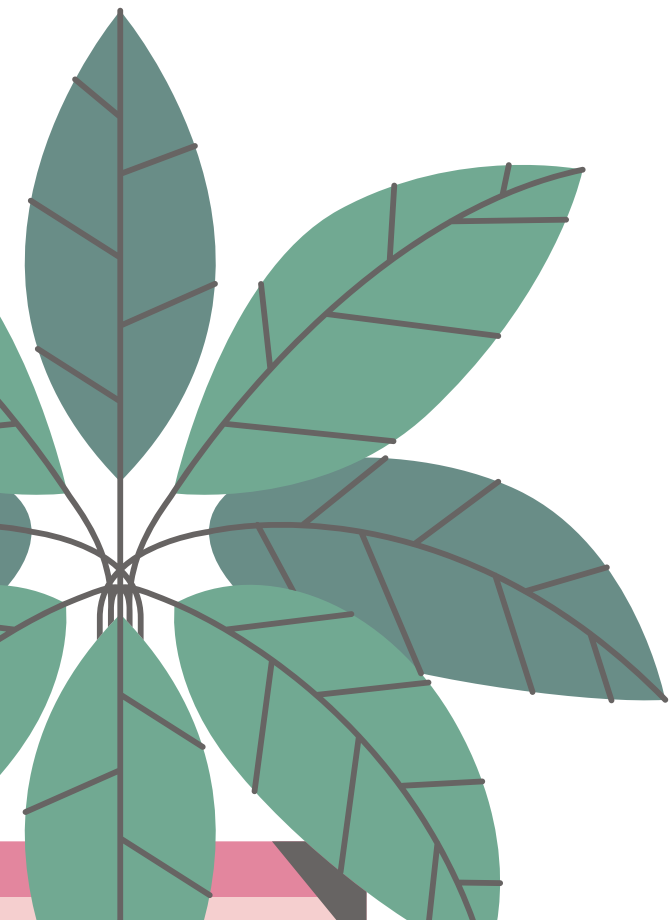
BASIC NEEDS WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your basic needs wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your basic needs wellness goals



PHYSICAL WELLNESS



What is Physical Wellness?

Physical wellness is the practice of recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep. This can be practiced by incorporating small changes into your routine or diet.

Tips for Physical Wellness as a VISTA

Physical Activity & Sleep:

1. Take the steps instead of using the elevator when able
2. Try walking as if you're already late for the bus or an important meeting
3. Set an alarm to go off every hour to get you to move around for a minute or two during a long work day
4. Take naps when you can!

Nutrition:

1. Change your surroundings. Find ways to make healthier choices the easier choices, such as having an apple for a snack rather than cookies
2. Drink a glass of water between meals, or have a glass at your desk
3. Try to plan your meal ahead of time instead of going out to eat
4. Eat smaller portions, or save items for leftovers

Health:

1. Go to regular check-up visits with your doctor, dentist, &/or OBG/YN
2. Review what the IMG [Healthcare Benefits](#) or [Allowance Plan](#) covers

Where to find Physical Wellness Resources

- Your campus fitness center
- Open, outdoor space or your room
- The campus health office
- [CCNYPA 20-21 Resource Folder](#), [Resource Sharing List](#)

PHYSICAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal physical wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your physical wellness goals



SOCIAL WELLNESS



What is Social Wellness?

Social wellness is the practice of developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system. Positive social habits can help you build support systems and stay healthier mentally and physically.

Social wellness also recognizes the importance of voicing your needs and being assertive in communicating this to your friends & colleagues.

Tips for Social Wellness as a VISTA

- Reach out to VISTAs in similar focus areas
- Start a group chat with VISTAs you click with
- Volunteer at a local organization, or connect with your volunteers
- Compliment a friend or colleague on a non-physical attribute
- Join a focus group or committee to meet new people
- Share your feelings openly & honestly with those you care about
- Don't forget about your hobbies and interests, and don't be afraid to explore new ones!
- Join an in-person or virtual exercise class at your local library or gym
- Set aside time each week or month to spend time with loved ones
- Consider perspectives other than your own
- Explore different areas of social media and share fun updates!

Where to find Social Wellness Resources

- VISTA Webinars & Virtual Happy Hours
- Any on-campus or virtual events your host site is facilitating
- [MyLifeExpert, Article](#)
- [Social Wellness Toolkit from the National Institute of Health](#)
- [Relearning the Art of Asking Questions](#)

SOCIAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal social wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your social wellness goals



EMOTIONAL WELLNESS




What is Emotional Wellness?



Emotional wellness is coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships. This can be relationships with others, but most importantly the relationship you have with yourself.


Tips for Emotional Wellness as a VISTA



- Do one thing that you love every day
 - Find relaxation and mindfulness practices that work for you. This could be eating a meal by yourself or using meditation videos on YouTube
 - Talk to a counselor if you are experiencing any form of depression. Remember you have free, confidential counseling services through [MyLifeExpert](#)
 - Note what you've accomplished at the end of the day, not what you've failed to do. Be kind to yourself and celebrate small victories!
 - Forgive yourself. Everyone makes mistakes. Learn from what went wrong, but don't dwell on it
 - Practice mindful eating by being aware of all aspects of your meal, from taste to texture.
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Where to find Emotional Health Resources



- [MyLifeExpert](#)
 - [Resource Sharing List](#), Mental Health Tab
 - [Self Care Folder](#)
 - [Black Emotional & Mental Health Collective](#)
 - [Emotional Wellness Toolkit from the National Institute of Health](#)
 - [Calm: A Sleep & Meditation App](#)
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EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal emotional wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your emotional wellness goals



VOCATIONAL WELLNESS

What is Vocational Wellness?

Vocational wellness is finding personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work. Though a job might not seem fulfilling, look for the skills you are gaining for your personal furtherment and future career goals

Vocational Wellness as a VISTA

- Find one thing during your workday that you felt good about. This could be beautifully stocking shelves or a great interaction with a colleague.
- Put a little bit of yourself in everything that you do. Get creative at work and trust in yourself that you will produce something incredible!
- Plan your future, whether this is a 5-year or 10-year plan, or even a career goal 30 years down the line. Nothing is unrealistic!
- Listen to a success story from someone in your current or intended field
- Talk to a mentor about what they enjoy the most about their work
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from your colleagues, sometimes something that appeared to be a "one person job" is more of a team effort!
- Research government jobs and learn about your Non-Competitive Eligibility to help navigate your year after VISTA
- Create a portfolio of all the resources/projects you've created

Where to find Vocational Wellness Resources

- Career and/or professional development offices at your host site
- Your site supervisor or CCNYPA supervisors
- Past academic or professional mentors
- Resource Sharing List, Professional Development Tab
- Considering Your Career Options: What Can You Do Today?

VOCATIONAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal vocational wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your vocational wellness goals



INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS



What is Intellectual Wellness?



Intellectual wellness is recognizing your creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills. This isn't just playing math games on your phone, it is creative modes of expression like painting or reading a book.



Tips for Intellectual Wellness as a VISTA



- Read a blog post, book, or poem that interests you
- Listen to a podcast on your way to class or work
- Explore a genre of music you're not familiar with
- Check out information-sharing websites, such as [Wide Open Schools](#) or [Google Arts & Culture](#) to learn about something that interests you
- Explore a place that *you're familiar with* and note all of the little things that you didn't notice before
- Explore a place *you've never been to* before. Take in the sights, smells, sounds, and air around you.
- Create something by drawing, painting, sculpting, singing, or simply imagining! Express your thoughts through this work
- Write a poem, short story, or song to express your thoughts
- Do the opposite of what you normally do for one hour a day, you might learn something new about yourself!

Where to find Intellectual Wellness Resources



- Your host site's library & community library
 - [Resource Sharing List](#), Personal Development Tab
 - [Anti-Racism Resource Folder](#)
 - Local farmers markets or farm stands
 - [TED Talks](#), the shared [Spotify Playlist](#)
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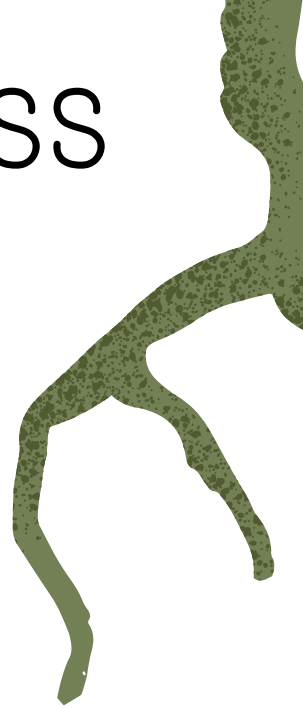
INTELLECTUAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal intellectual wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your intellectual wellness goals



SPIRITUAL WELLNESS



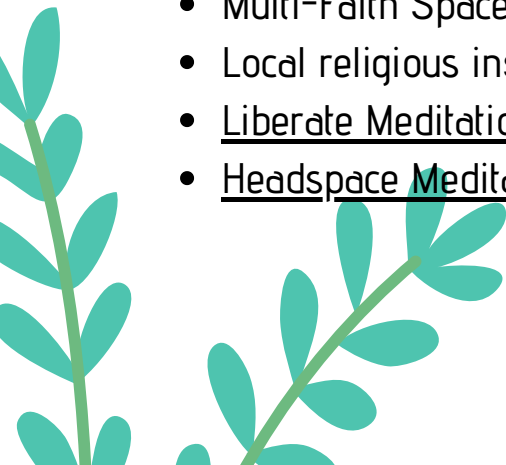
What is Spiritual Wellness?

Spiritual wellness is the practice of expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Whether you are religious or not, spiritual wellness does NOT mean you need to ascribe to any religion. Whatever speaks to you the most and drives you forward in your life defines your spirituality.

Tips for Spiritual Wellness as a VISTA

- Connect with yourself by practicing self-care. This is different for everyone, and could be a spa night or shutting your phone off for a little
- Spend time in a place that brings you inner peace, such as your room, a park, or a coffee shop
- Listen to a meditation while on public transportation
- Write a thank-you note to yourself to practice gratitude and self-love
- Write down 5 things that you value most in your life
- Chat with a friend or stranger about something that brings you joy
- Recite 5 things that you're grateful for each morning
- Volunteer at a local organization or donate to a cause that you care about
- Write down your favorite quotes and pin them to a physical or virtual bulletin board
- Eat or cook food that is central to your identity or culture
- Listen to music or watch a movie that inspires you

Where to Find Spiritual Wellness Resources

- Multi-Faith Spaces at your host site
 - Local religious institutions
 - [Liberate Meditation App for BIPOC](#)
 - [Headspace Meditation App](#)
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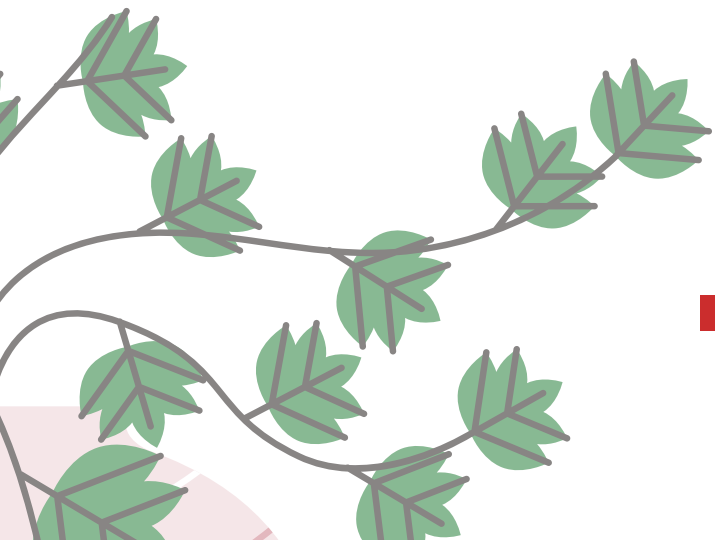
SPIRITUAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal spiritual wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your spiritual wellness goals



ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

What is Environmental Wellness?

Environmental wellness is the promotion of good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being. You can't always choose the environments you're in, but you can take steps towards a safer, more stimulating environment to be in every day!

Tips for Environmental Wellness as a VISTA

- Clean your room once a week to reduce the presence of dirt and bacteria that could be making you feel sluggish
- Go for a walk outside or in a pleasant environment at least once a day to boost your Vitamin D intake
- Use a re-usable water bottle to stay hydrated and reduce waste
- Turn the light off when your room is not in use
- Keep a carbon-monoxide detector in your house to check air quality
- Eat your lunch outside or in a sunny spot
- Go through your fridge once per week and use up all items that are close to going bad. Try cutting up and freezing produce when you purchase it
- Organize your desk in a way that makes sense to you. Having a space that is comfortable will help you feel more productive

Where to find Environmental Wellness Resources

- Local Green spaces or hiking trails near you
- The Library
- [NAACP Environmental & Climate Justice](#)
- [Food Justice](#)
- [Environmental Wellness Resources from Mercy College](#)
- [Tips & Tricks Infographic](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL WELLNESS

What will I do?

List, draw, or describe action steps you will take towards your personal environmental wellness

What do I need?

List, draw, or describe items, individuals, or resources you will need to achieve your environmental wellness goals



RESPONSIBILITIES

This is a basic guideline of questions you should think about at the end of each month when reflecting on your journey. Think about how you're incorporating wellness into your life and how you can improve in certain areas.

- Have you spent time working on your wellness goals, and if you have, did you reach any?
- What is one thing that made me think differently today, this past week, or month?
- Did I put my own needs before those of others? If I didn't, did my personal wellness suffer because of this?
- List 3 achievable goals for the remainder of the week. For example, eating three meals a day or going for a walk
- Pick one dimension of wellness and think of a friend or loved one who could use some help. Reach out and do this exercise with them
- _____
- _____
- _____

Thank yourself for being incredible!

*“Self care is in the little moments —
bathing, sweating, washing your hair.. it’s
in laughing so hard you can barely catch
a breath, your lungs expanding on a
morning jog... now more than ever we
need to enjoy the quiet within ourselves.”*

-Lizzo



*Created by Mary
Sherman*