

Daily Union Article

Saturday, June 4, 2016

"The Good Life" – Part 1 of 3

What does the phrase "the good life" mean to you? For a teenager, "the good life" might mean a full tank of gas and unlimited access to video games or trendy apps. For a parent of that teenager, "the good life" might mean you have gotten through the day without an argument with that teen about how much time they spend on their technology devices. For a person experiencing their middle age, it might be financial stability or a successfully established business. "The good life" for a retired senior might be having the time to enjoy travels or hobbies that were put off for years while raising children. For folks in their later years, "the good life" might be that they are able to enjoy their daily life without pain.

In general, "the good life" is related to the feeling of well-being or wellness they have. What is wellness? There are a wide range of descriptions, but common to all of them is a multi-dimensional approach to wellness. Wellness isn't limited to physical health, nutrition, and exercise. It is much broader than that.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines wellness as "the quality or state of being in good health especially as an actively sought goal <lifestyles that promote wellness>." It is a holistic definition that embraces many aspects of a persons' life.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency within the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, shares a model for wellness that defines eight dimensions of wellness:

1. **Emotional**—Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
2. **Environmental**—Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
3. **Financial**—Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
4. **Intellectual**—Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
5. **Occupational**—Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
6. **Physical**—Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep
7. **Social**—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
8. **Spiritual**—Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life



Source: www.samhsa.gov/wellness

Psychologist Dr. Carl Rogers explains that "The good life is a process not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination." Being healthy in all 8 dimensions of wellness, most certainly would be "the good life."

How can you work toward being healthy in all 8 dimensions of wellness? A first step would be to identify who or what steals from your wellness dimensions.

Wellness Robbers Activity:

On a piece of notebook paper, list the 8 dimensions of wellness leaving several lines between each dimension. If you consider the things or people who rob you of your ability to reach optimum levels of wellness, you can then identify steps to improve that dimension.

Setting Wellness Goals:

Now that you have identified what is impeding your ability to experience optimum wellness, establish goals you would like to reach to improve your state of well-being. Use the SMART goal-setting model to help your goals be attainable.

S – Specific: Make your goals specific so that you can see your progress clearly. You will be much more likely to achieve the goal if it is specific and you can see the success you are having in working toward it. An example of a vague goal would be: Get Healthy. A more specific goal: Walk 2 miles daily.

M – Measurable: As in the example of a specific goal above, you need to be able to measure success toward your goal. To determine if your goal is measurable ask yourself “How much, how often, or how many?” Walk 2 miles daily is a goal that clarifies both how much and how often.

A – Attainable: If a goal is important to you, you are more likely to attain it. Choose only goals that you can set your sights on and use them to motivate you for the change you are desiring. If you are in fairly good physical health, maybe 2 miles a day is too easy. Bump it a mile each month until you reach 5 or 6 miles. If you don’t have the time for that (it would take 1.5 to 2 hrs), then maybe you need to leave it at 2 miles, but increase your pace. If you walk at a brisk pace, you can get 2 miles covered in about 40 minutes.

R – Realistic: A goal is realistic when you are both willing AND able to follow through on it. In the walking example, you need to consider what pace you are willing and able to use daily. What can your body handle? What will your schedule realistically allow for?

T – Timely or Tangible: There needs to be a time frame assigned to your goal. Keeping it open-ended will likely lead to goal failure. If you anchor it with a time frame, it gives you the opportunity to look back and say “I did this” and feel the success that comes with reaching a goal. The “T” in a SMART goal is also identified as tangible. Tangible goals are those which can be experienced with your senses. You can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste the outcome of your efforts. Life experiences that are linked to your senses are more specific, easier to measure and thus become more attainable.

If you want more information about SMART goals, check out this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-SvuFIQjK8>

We all desire to have “the good life.” However, having “the good life” isn’t by serendipity. It requires looking forward, setting goals, and taking action to create an environment for ourselves that supports our desire to have “the good

life." Look for next week's article to explore "the good life" in the context of emotional and social wellness. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!