

Wellness coaching: Mayo Clinic resiliency expert explains how it improves overall quality of life

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Wellness coaching has become an increasingly prevalent strategy to help individuals improve their health and well-being. Recently, wellness coaching was found to improve quality of life, mood and perceived stress, according to a Mayo Clinic study published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*. Matthew Clark, Ph.D., L.P., lead author of the study and resiliency expert at the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program, answers some common questions about wellness coaching.

What is a wellness coach? Wellness coaches are trained and certified by professional organizations to help individuals identify their personal values and desires for change. The coaches provide practical recommendations to help individuals transform their goals into action, in order to sustain the changes over time and improve their quality of life.

"Mayo Clinic wellness coaches assist patients, through a strength-based approach, in identifying goals and potential barriers to success, and then create strategies to help them improve on a week-by-week basis," explains Dr. Clark. "A strength-based approach recognizes that patients bring experience, knowledge and skills which will help them make positive lifestyle changes."

What are popular areas of improvement? "Wellness coaching focuses on the specific problems someone wants to address, such as weight loss, [stress management](#) or goals focusing on work-life balance. We offer

wellness coaching to help people have a better life, and improve their overall quality of life, whether it's socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically or mentally," says Dr. Clark.

How are these improvements maintained over time? Wellness coaching teaches individuals appropriate goal-setting techniques, strategies for enhancing social and emotional support and other skills to sustain progress over a substantial period of time.

"In our recent study, we looked at participants three months after completing wellness coaching. We found that people not only maintained the changes, they exhibited signs of further improvement," says Dr. Clark. "Therefore, we did teach people the appropriate skills to improve their quality of life and maintain the changes."

Why has wellness coaching become increasingly prevalent? Wellness coaching programs can be found in facilities throughout the country. Dr. Clark believes there are two main reasons causing the spike in popularity.

"First of all, wellness coaching does not pathologize or diagnose problems. If someone is having a difficult time losing weight or getting a good night's sleep, wellness coaching helps the individual feel like a normal person with a normal problem," he says. "Secondly, people enjoy Mayo Clinic's strength-based approach because it is empowering. We help people identify the resources that they already possess to make their desired improvements."

What is a common misconception? Even though wellness coaching has become extremely popular, not much research is available. A few studies have demonstrated the positive effects wellness coaching has on weight management, smoking and physical activity.

Dr. Clark believes many more studies are needed to compare the success of wellness coaching to other techniques, such as stress management groups and nutrition classes. "We are really in the beginning phase of looking at documented outcomes of wellness coaching," he says.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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