

# WHOLE PERSON, WHOLE HEALTH: NURTURING EVERY ASPECT OF OUR BEING



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**Theme of the Article:** Holistic Health

**Research Objectives:** This study examines the integration of six key dimensions of holistic health—mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, and financial—to promote balanced well-being, resilience, and a more fulfilling life.

### BIO

**Dr. Demisha Burns**, affectionately known as Dr. D, Mama D, and Kamali ("In her presence all are made whole"), is a distinguished leader in Social Work. Holding a Doctorate in Social Work from Clark Atlanta University with a focus on Policy, Planning, and Administration, she boasts over 20 years of experience across micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Dr. Burns champions diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB), emphasising sexual and women's health, HIV/AIDS, STIs, and mental health, including PTSD. Her roles include Policy & Advocacy Manager at WORLD, Consultant for UMOJA Health Access Point, and Deputy District Director for Congresswoman Barbara Lee. A survivor of domestic violence and sexual abuse, she empowers marginalised groups through Makn' Movz' and Sis Unleashed, advocating for authenticity and self-determination.

### Abstract

Holistic health is a comprehensive approach to wellness that integrates six key dimensions: mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, and financial health. This interconnected perspective recognises that optimal well-being results from balance across all aspects of life. Mental health focuses on stress management, cognitive clarity, and psychological resilience, often through mindfulness practices and professional support. Physical health emphasises regular exercise, balanced nutrition, and preventive care, including routine medical check-ups. Emotional health involves understanding and effectively managing feelings, fostering self-awareness, and building strong support networks. Spiritual health seeks meaning and purpose, often through meditation, connection with

nature, or religious practices. Sexual health prioritises safe, consensual practices, comprehensive education, and respectful relationships. Financial health stresses economic stability, literacy, and planning for long-term security.

By addressing these dimensions collectively, holistic health promotes overall well-being and resilience. This approach advocates for mindfulness, regular self-assessment, and integrated wellness strategies. It encourages individuals to nurture every facet of their being, fostering harmony and enabling them to thrive rather than merely survive. Holistic health emphasises the importance of balance, self-care, and continuous personal growth. It recognises that health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. By adopting this comprehensive approach, individuals can cultivate a more fulfilling, balanced, and

harmonious life.

**Keywords:** Holistic health, Wellness, Mental health, Physical health

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## 1. Introduction

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Most of us are well informed about the types of activities that help us with our physical health: a balanced diet, regular exercise, a good night's sleep, and adequate fresh air and sunshine. However, we may be less aware of the other equally important aspects of our being, our minds, our hearts, and our souls and the ways in which we can care for and nurture them. If we are to grow as human beings, we need to nourish our intellect, our emotions, and our spirit. These aspects all function together. It would be an illusion to believe that we could go for a jog when we are feeling out of sorts and immediately feel better. The body-mind link is an important link that must never be ignored. What follows then are some simple but very effective activities aimed at nurturing not only your body but also your mind, heart, and soul. I conceive of health in its broadest sense and domain, wholeness and totality. The individual, the organisation, the community, and society can be viewed as a harmonious constellation in which body, mind, heart, will,

relationships, and soul coexist within a total environment. I am not referring to a utopian perfect state because such a state in our world is an abstract notion. Rather, I am concerned with the striving after balance, wholeness, and harmony. All areas interact, each area moulds the other, and the flow of energy between them unites individuals, organisations, communities, and society in the process (Lynch, 2020). Health, therefore, is a dynamic state or process of becoming in which the dimensions of simultaneous unity and separation among body, mind, heart, will, relationships, and soul manifest in the interplay with constant movements and modulation.

### 1.1 Aim

The aim of this research paper is to support the individual in developing healthy life skills and abilities, well-being, and life satisfaction. Whole person health dares to ask not simply how we can cure sickness or prevent it, but rather how can we become ever more fully human? This is achieved via a review of existing literature sources.

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## 3. Results & Discussion

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Current research approaches

have provided a multifaceted understanding of health, suggesting that strong mental, physical, and social health are interconnected to produce an overall sense of well-being.

### 2.1. Holistic Health and Its Six Dimensions

Many people in health, education, and medical professions today use the term "holistic health." Regardless of whether they are speaking of a living person or a corporate entity, they tend to break health into six separate components: mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, and financial. They make the point that a deficiency in one part of a person's life will seriously interfere with the optimal functioning of the remaining five dimensions of health. Different perspectives voice varying opinions as to specific terminology or how many dimensions of health are worth investigating. (Forero, 2024)

The model is actually slowly moving its way into more traditional medical circles. It has been around for a long time, particularly in the Western world. The Ayurvedic tradition of India holds that optimal health is based on a balance of body, mind, and spirit. In the 1910s, it was stated that it was time to

take the “whole person” into account in health care. In the 1940s, health was defined as “not merely the absence of disease,” but a comprehensive approach to well-being. Our thesis, based on innumerable and diverse readings, is simply this: we agree. Viewing the human race as psychological or biological entities alone has become too confining. Pre-Victorian man, hundreds of years ago, often spoke of quintessence as the major categories of life.

Figure 1 represents the six interconnected dimensions of holistic health; mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, and financial health. Each segment demonstrates how these dimensions contribute to overall well-being, emphasising the importance of balance across all areas.

## 2.2. Mental Health: Stress Management and Resilience

Too much stress is a serious mental health issue and has implications for our physical health (Somani, 2021). Everyone on campus; students, faculty, and staff, has likely experienced physical or emotional symptoms of stress at some point in time. However, people often manage stress differently, have different thresholds for stress, and find different stressors more distressing. Stressors vary from person to person and can include personal, family, work, and academic challenges. If an individual is not coping well with stress or it is prolonged, it may have negative effects on physical and mental health, including chronic conditions, mood disturbances, anxiety,

and depression (Zavitsanou & Drigas, 2021).

In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on the nature of resilience—our psychological and physical strengths and competencies. People vary in their levels of resilience influenced by genetic factors, individual learning experiences, personal choices, and change. Resilience is the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress, and it can help protect against the development of mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Developing resilience can help raise an individual’s mental wellness and reduce the risk of developing a mental illness. Evidence suggests that resilience can be taught, developed, and nurtured—life experiences and new learning can increase resilience against future stress and life events (Mao & Agyapong, 2021).

Engaging in stress management techniques, particularly those that improve resilience, can lead to positive mental wellness outcomes. The key list below outlines some daily practices that can build an individual’s resilience as well as increase mental wellness. Supporting mental health is an integral part of wholesome health because of its interaction with other aspects of our

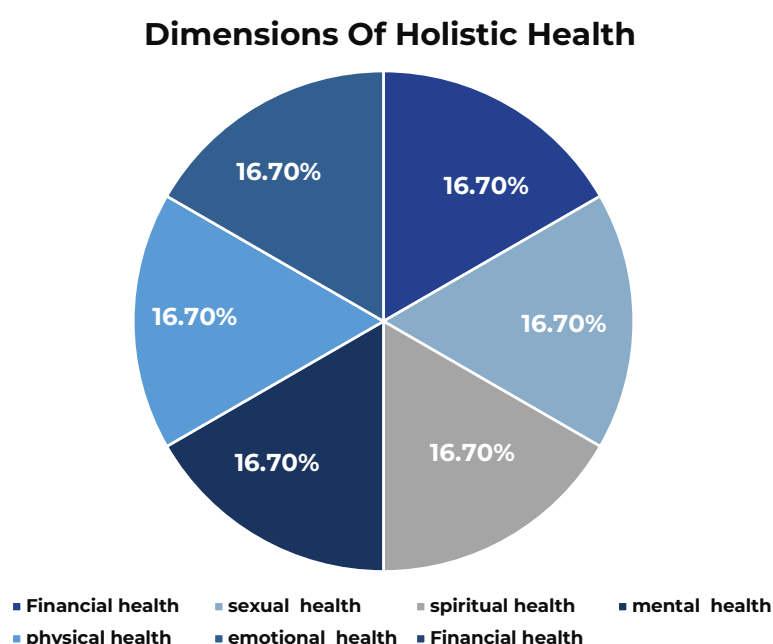


Figure 1

physical wellness. Positive mental wellness is typically conceptualised as the ability to sustain self-esteem and approach challenges with clear, creative thinking. Negative mental health, labeled mental illness when severe, impacts physical well-being, particularly the immune system and the body's stress response. This module touches on various aspects of mental health, including specific components of a model of mental wellness, mental illnesses including adjustment disorders, and their relationships with other aspects of well-being. In addition to external support, these factors can be worked on individually to help improve mental health and wellness (Kalita, 2023). Examples of best practices are: therapy, identifying what is important to you, understanding the time of life, and maintaining good mental health hygiene with drugs, alcohol, and food choices.

**2.3. Physical Health: Exercise, Nutrition, and Preventive Care**

Regular exercise and physical activity have many potential health benefits. They can help prevent disease and enhance overall wellness by making both your body and mind stronger. Using exercise to positively influence your

general health is crucial to enhancing your quality of life. Making smarter nutrition choices can go a long way toward preventing diseases like obesity, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses. What and how much a person eats can affect how the body functions and feels (van Sluijs et al., 2021). Consuming a well-balanced diet can increase energy levels, support bodily functions, and improve general well-being. If dietitians take the opportunity to educate individuals properly, it could be a cost-effective way to stop a lot of issues at the root. Using preventive measures to avoid disease makes more financial, emotional, and physical sense than treating disease once it occurs.

The aim of preventive care is to avoid complications that may result from illness or some other issue by using the most up-to-date knowledge in both

physical and psychological health. Preventive care can be especially beneficial for individuals who are healthy, particularly if they participate in a preventative lifestyle. Scientific evidence strongly suggests that if people receive aftercare following a primary care visit, they miss fewer workdays and have higher productivity while there. This is why, in addition to the physical aspect, we put a premium on good nutrition. In the definition of wellness, physical health is given priority, despite the fact that it is just one of six dimensions of health. According to this interpretation, everything else falls apart if a person neglects even the most basic version of the physical aspects of wellness (Slater et al., 2020). Treat your body nicely, and you increase your chances of rewarding your mind.

Figure 2 illustrates the

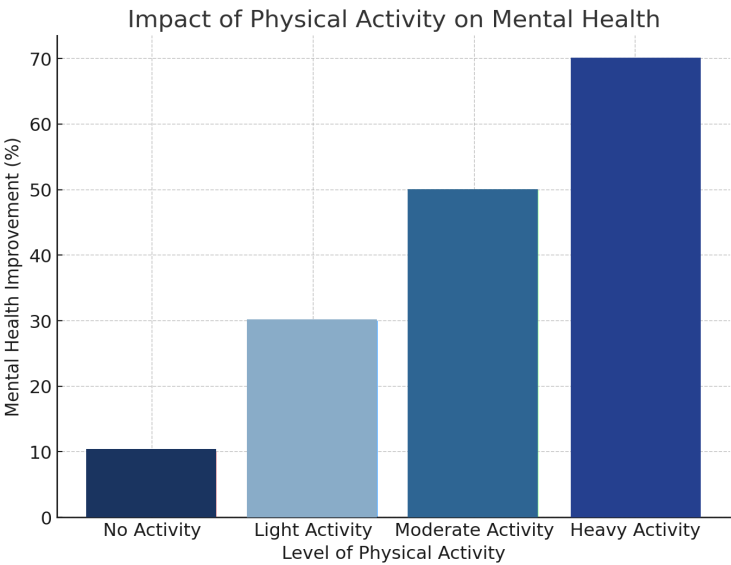


Figure 2 (Mahindru, et al, 2023)

correlation between regular physical activity and improvements in mental health, including stress reduction and resilience. The data is based on research showing positive mental health outcomes from exercise.

#### **2.4. Emotional Health: Self-Awareness and Relationships**

The ability to adapt and be resilient is a crucial aspect of emotional health. How we view ourselves and the meaning we make of our lives and our experiences all play a part in how we feel and how satisfied we are with our day-to-day lives. The specific emotional responses created by our interpretations or appraisals depend on our unique ways of understanding the world and our place in it (Ungar & Theron, 2020). Emotional health includes our cognitive beliefs and interpretations, our behaviours, and our ability to connect or build relationships with ourselves, with others, and with our beliefs or institutional practices that bring us comfort, peace, and understanding.

While self-awareness is important, emotional health develops fully by paying attention to and developing our relationships with other people who care about us and

who notice us. The ability to foster and maintain positive relationships with others can contribute to our emotional health in times of distress. The relatively recent findings about the role of affect on basic cognitive processes and the subsequent effects on attention, learning, and decision making point to the value of developing emotional self-awareness (Waters et al. 2022). The evidence showing the complexity of emotion and the role of possible personality traits in driving emotional experience and ability shows the importance of emotional regulation, or the ability to recognise and properly express emotions.

In other words, emotional health is related to the ability to comprehend the causes and subsequent value or impact of the feeling and control its expression. Emotional health is closely related to some personality disorders and has been shown to relate to biological health conditions such as cardiovascular disease. Several researchers also argue that the development of internal emotional intelligence depends on factors such as upbringing, parent-child relationships, and one's regulatory physiology. A large part of this biological experience is related to learning. When one learns better emotional modulation, one is more likely to develop

self-awareness of their feelings and behaviours. Mediation skills, communication skills, and active listening have been shown to indirectly relate to better emotional awareness and regulation. Also, learning to detect when something or someone is displeased, anxious, or stressed can inform where one needs to seek further support, strengthening the discourse of stigma reduction. One potential consideration between fields is that approaches like reflective practice of a person or dialogic process of family therapy might offer a space for this increased emotional awareness.

In another view, the ability to set personal and interpersonal boundaries is also suggested to be beneficial for emotional health to teach an individual where they end and another begins. Boundaries require an awareness of people's limits and an ability to make judgments about what is right for an individual and the family and to what degree a person could benefit from further help. The physical boundaries often depend on the social context, viewed as a product of one's flexible agency in interaction with the macro-structures on which one relies; in other words, an awareness and skill for self- and social regulation is suggested as healthy. Self-awareness,

frequently one domain of emotional intelligence, is thought to be a key element in the development and sustainment of better emotional health (Mertens et al., 2022). In summary, self-awareness is discussed from various perspectives as an important aspect of emotional health. It is likely the first step in a series of sub-components of understanding emotions. The ability to recognise feelings, both in terms of their presence and their causes, is discussed through many lenses and cited frequently in order to be labelled as a frequently endorsed domain of emotional intelligence.

## **2.5. Spiritual Health: Meaning and Connection with Nature**

Spiritual health is sometimes defined according to religious adherence but can also be interpreted in broader terms. A meaningful life that aligns with personal values and goals reflects a sense of purpose or calling and extends beyond oneself, which may be considered an expression of spiritual well-being. Connection with and appreciation for nature have likewise been interpreted as spiritual experiences for some people (Pritchard et al., 2020). There is a growing body of empirical evidence that a sense of meaning, purpose, or connection with nature

is correlated with better life satisfaction and overall health, and lower associated mental health symptoms. Spirituality is one aspect of this more total wellness objective, and we can choose to define it in a variety of ways that align with our values.

Ways to increase spiritual health include a morning revitalisation and positivity routine, mindfulness, and being fully present in and engaging with what you are doing. Stress management, self-awareness, and ample time for rest are similarly vital. Grounding and reconnecting with nature or fields that make you feel a sense of belonging is especially helpful as well. When we regard that love and connection lie beneath all and promote them, religion in all its forms becomes less important. In fact, spiritual health can provide comfort and reassurance, helping people endure hard times. The definition we utilise is less important to our values and implications (Wicks, 2022). Rather, embracing this complex, interdependent nature with courage and hope, particularly where some of our acquaintances fail, crisis strikes, or a loved one departs, increases our general well-being.

## **2.6. Sexual Health: Safe and Consensual Practices**

Sexual health is a crucial part of being a whole person. It is defined as the integration of the somatic, emotional, intellectual, and social aspects of sexual being, in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication, and love. When sexual health is impacted by disease or by relationship issues, it can be tremendously disruptive to a person's quality of life (Bradfield et al., 2022). Sexual assault and abuse can have very grave, long-lasting effects on physical health, mental health, and on a person's relationships.

Safe sex takes many forms. In many philosophical systems based on sex positivity, it is suggested that informed consent, respect, and open communication between sexual partners mitigate against the majority of the risks of engaging in sex. Some sexual health professionals also suggest a range of physical and emotional practices that fall under the umbrella of "safer sex." It is a good idea to get educated about these practices, especially if you are considering becoming sexually active or if you are facing particular risks. There are many places to learn about sex education, both inside and outside of mainstream institutions like schools, churches, and medical clinics. Sex education and discussions

about sexual wellness are not typically part of standard healthcare, so it is a good idea to seek out a separate sex educator or therapist. Be wary; it is misconceived that the more sexual activity you experience, the more harmful it is to your body as well (Kantor and Lindberg, 2020). This is actually quite the opposite, with research suggesting that as sexual activity increases, so does the risk of heart attack.

## **2.7. Financial Health: Stability and Planning**

Financial Health - Stability and Future Planning. The phrase “health is wealth” is connected in part to the idea of financial health. A broad general definition here refers to financial health as a person’s relationship with their finances, and how good or bad that relationship is in terms of mental, emotional, and physical well-being. A solid financial health check-up often leads to better lifestyle choices and an increase in happiness. Financial health can be connected to relatively stable levels of income and expenses for a person, and is increased by managing personal expenses and having a savings balance. Any savings increase feelings of financial well-being. This “nest egg” can better a person’s state of mind, giving them tangible evidence of future thinking

(Wilmarth, 2021). People who struggle financially often live in a world of stress and scarcity, and in such a world, planning for the now, let alone for the future, is a luxury rather than a possibility. Nine out of ten Americans will feel financially stressed in their lifetime.

Given the potential negative impact on mental and emotional health, financial stress is discussed in next week’s instalment of Whole Person, Whole Health. Practice “Let’s get down to it. I want to get my financial situation healthy, but I don’t know where to start,” says a U.S. employee. Financial well-being empowers decision-making, and that means, for example, taking steps to make healthier lifestyle choices. So how does a person go from being financially concerned and trying to adjust to living within their means to developing a healthy relationship with money? “Learn what is coming in and what is going out.” Or, in financial literacy terms, the number-one piece of advice is to build a spending and savings plan. Include all known monthly expenses (Glover et al. 2023). If an expense varies from month to month, such as utilities or groceries, record the highest known amount. Based on the income, next include fund promises, savings and investments, emergency fund building, and necessary

insurance payments. Going through financial statements, insurance policies, or investment accounts can help find missing pieces.

## **2.8. Holistic Approach: Harmony and Resilience**

A holistic approach to health holds the assumption that health is not only an absence of disorder or disease but a presence of harmony, vitality, and energy in every aspect of our being. Each of our dimensions is unique, and yet they are all nested so closely together, affecting and being affected by each other in an integrated way. Traditionally, a Western medical model has been built using a more reductionist approach, where every problem or illness is reduced into components and later examined as a sum of those components. This requires expertise in individual dimensions of health or approaches to problem-solving (Logan et al. 2023). Over time, the human body and its priorities were divided into more specialised parts. The search continues: if an isolated cause is identified, an isolated treatment could be developed.

Each of our beings is truly interdependent. As everyone is made of several interconnected dimensions, good health cannot be

achieved when one dimension is showing poor results. Technological advancements and robotics are a potential technology that has the ability to ease human life (Surao, 2020), however striving for an overall improvement of the whole being in synergy leads to integrated living each day. The strategies are agreed upon: medications, if necessary and suited; safe and appealing environments with time for relaxation and joy; support in living a life that includes physical activities; feeling good about yourself and having control over your circumstances. Holistic health is not mainly about downside avoidance. Focusing on well-being invites the feeling of comfort and resilience. It means that when the going gets tough, people have the ability to rise up. When in pain or under sharp and continued stress, loss, or uncertainty, they have the strength and the skills to adapt, recover, and thrive. These assets contain actual physical and biochemical physiological systems and cognitive responses in the brain. It also includes individual capacity to make choices and metaphysical and even spiritual aspects. The broader perspective includes communities and societies (Voukelatou et al., 2021). A multifaceted orientation on health stresses the modes to build balance and resilience in the diversified aspects of

living. It concerns all features of a dynamic and integrated life; it means, etymologically, a way of life. Focusing on the whole is to embrace all revolutions, realising that they are interlaced and establish the overall impression.

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### 3. Conclusion

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The goal of this research study has been to present many specific ideas around all the dimensions of whole person health and the actions that we can take each day to continually grow and develop our whole being. While the specific ideas may be quite helpful, by far the most important idea is the concept of whole person health itself. When it comes to your health, we now know definitively that everything matters. Everything is interconnected. We disregard or neglect any aspect of our lives to our peril. You are the only person who can take the idea of whole person health and make it come alive in your own personal experience. A healthy whole person is the foundation of success, happiness, and fulfillment in the rest of our lives. While attention to our health is the most important thing that any single individual can do, our current societal and health care systems focus only on illness, not health and

the whole person. Health is a comprehensive state that includes physical, social, and mental well-being, going beyond just the absence of illness (Mahindru et al., 2023).

### 3.1 Recommendations

Recently, this holistic approach, known as whole person health, has gained traction among professionals in the fields of library and information science. To effectively leverage these insights in fostering healing and nurturing both individuals and society collectively, consider the following suggestions:

#### 1. Integrate Multiple Dimensions of Health:

Recognise and embrace the various interconnected facets of health and well-being in your efforts. Encourage people to engage not only with their physical health but also with their emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual aspects. This extensive perspective creates a nurturing environment that facilitates healing.

#### 2. Adopt a Holistic Framework:

Transition your perspective from a focus on disease to one oriented towards wellness. This entails appreciating the significance of treating the individual as a whole, identifying strengths

alongside challenges. Engage in practices that enhance overall well-being rather than concentrating solely on specific health issues.

### 3. Facilitate Open Dialogue

**About Health:** Provide spaces for individuals to share their health journeys. Foster discussions that encompass personal experiences as well as wider societal topics related to well-being. This approach can help cultivate a sense of community and understanding regarding the multifaceted nature of health.

### 4. Incorporate Ethical

**Considerations:** In your interactions with digital media and information practices, be mindful of the ethical ramifications concerning both individual and societal well-being. Aim to develop resources that are inclusive, accessible, and sensitive to the diverse complexity of human experiences.

### 5. Promote Lifelong Learning:

Inspire individuals to continuously seek knowledge and engage in personal development across all life domains. Support avenues for intellectual and emotional growth, which contribute to nurturing a well-rounded and healthy life. By applying these recommendations, you can play a vital role in nurturing the whole person, ultimately leading to enhanced societal

health. Emphasising a holistic perspective not only improves individual well-being but also fosters a more interconnected and supportive community.

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