

# *Healthy Profits*

## *The 5 Elements of Strategic Wellness*

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*“The concept of total wellness recognizes that our every thought, word, and behavior affects our greater health and well-being. And we, in turn, are affected not only emotionally but also physically and spiritually.”*

*~ Greg Anderson, founder of  
The American Wellness Project*

## *Introduction*

Congratulations on taking a well deserved big giant leap towards health and wellness. Right now, you may be in either one of two stages in your health journey. Are you beginning a personal transformation, moving one step closer to improved health? Or, are you a seasoned health veteran looking for more information to maintain or reach new health levels? Regardless of where you begin or where you end up, it's the journey combined with knowledge that creates the "stick to it" glue in reaching the why of our goals. Here is a formula to help make the journey interesting and successful.

Personal Desire (The Why) +  
Increased Health Knowledge (The How) +  
Action Plan (The When) =  
Successful Health Journey

When I began my professional career in the early 1980's, the concept of wellness in the workplace was in its infancy. According to James William Miller in *Wellness: The History and Development of a Concept*, "By the late 1970s, the wellness movement was well under way in the United States. Some businesses were beginning to offer workplace wellness programs." Armed with my passion for staying healthy, I sought to develop my own wellness program. At that time, I had no clue that what I designed and implemented on a personal level would be considered a wellness program as we know it today.

I included activities that would keep me fit in five strategic elements of wellness: physical, intellectual, social, occupational, and emotional. I read self help books, attended free hospital seminars, tried healthy recipes and healthy lifestyle suggestions. This was all in an effort to become and stay healthy at all moments in my life. I was not looking at the magazines and media to be my guide. I had other goals that were important and wanted to incorporate these into a total healthy lifestyle for the long haul.



So why the five elements of strategic wellness? Because a variety of wellness activities keeps our whole person on a healthy even keel. We can be physically healthy but socially in poor health if we don't know how to connect with our co-workers on a daily basis. We can be an intellectual genius at our job but emotionally incapable of working out conflict in the workplace and build strong teams. Health is not all physical—it's not all of any one of the five strategic areas. It is a unique, continual learning and dynamic balancing act between all five elements: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and occupational. Along the way, we become healthy and prosperous as we see what learning new skills does for our self-esteem, confidence, and internal profits. Our organizations benefit, as we become our best, reach goals for our department, and increase revenue for our organization.

The thirty-one wellness experts in this book will help you gain the knowledge to make the journey interesting in each of the five strategic elements. These professionals have hundreds of years of combined experience serving global populations, helping to maintain and improve health and well-being. In addition, most of



these specialists are already published authors and well known health bloggers in the wellness community. Their expertise can help you move one step closer to your personal health goals.

From CEO's to nurses, their education and accreditation reaches into the heart of the wellness profession. Accomplished and credible, they are dedicated to and passionate about helping you and your organization reach your health and wellness goals. Daily, they see the consequences of poor health choices and celebrate the accomplishments of health success. Their knowledge extends beyond the bounds of their practices into the wellness community with integrity and impact. Now it extends to you!

### **Wellness In The Workplace: The Why?**

The average American spends well over 40 hours working per week. Increased demands from global competition, fewer resources and tighter deadlines mean that work consumes a vast majority of our days. Over an extended period of time, this leads to feeling overworked, overwhelmed, stressed, negative, and unproductive.

How about that commute? The Gallup Organization annual Work and Education survey from 2007 found that "American workers report spending an average of 46 minutes commuting to and from work in a typical day."<sup>1</sup> This survey also showed that "The vast majority of workers say their commute is not that stressful, but workers who travel at least an hour each day are much more likely than those who travel less than that to say their commute is stressful."

And then there's what we do when we're not working that also asks us for our time in polite and not so polite ways. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has compiled a list of personal care activities that take our time on a daily basis. By the way, don't forget to include the holidays and special event party planning.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28504/Workers-Average-Commute-RoundTrip-Minutes-Typical-Day.aspx>

## *Introduction*

### Personal care activities <sup>2</sup>

- Sleeping
- Eating and drinking
- Household activities
- Housework
- Food preparation and cleanup
- Lawn and garden care
- Household management
- Purchasing goods and services
- Consumer goods purchases
- Professional and personal care services
- Caring for and helping household
- Members
- Children
- Caring for and helping non-household
- Members
- Adults
- Working
- Work-related activities
- Educational Activities
- Attending class
- Homework and research
- Organizational, civic, and religious activities
- Religious and spiritual activities
- Volunteering (Organizational and civic activities)
- Leisure and sports
- Socializing and communicating
- Watching Television
- Participating in sports, exercise, and recreation
- Telephone calls, mail, and e-mail

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<sup>2</sup> List compiled from Bureau of Labor Statistics  
<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t08.htm>

## Other activities

Between work, commute, and personal responsibilities, where does personal health and fitness fit into the mix on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis? It stands to reason that if we are spending more time at work then why not practice wellness at the worksite to keep healthy?

The number of employers implementing specific wellness programs increased three times from 2007 to 2008. In 2008, for example, the top five wellness programs implemented were promoting physical activity (68% vs. 19% in 2007); disease management programs (60% vs. 18%); health risk appraisals (48% vs. 14%); biometric screening (47% vs. 12%); and telephonic health care coaching (45% vs. 14%) according to Aon Consulting's *2008 Benefits and Talent Survey*.<sup>3</sup>

Ok, here it comes! The response, "I don't have time to take a lunch—how can I take time to exercise or attend other wellness program events?" The answer is—drum roll please—step away from the desk. If you are thinking that you have no time, you're right. It's a conscious and deliberate choice to put one hour of the day towards an activity that will make you healthy and productive. For example, lunch. Try walking, attending a wellness event at work, chilling out, or choosing healthy foods and portions throughout the day. Adelle Davis, a noted nutritionist, is quoted, "As I see it, every day you do one of two things: build health or produce disease in yourself."

The choice is yours.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ccibenefitsolutions.com/content/HRinsider/MayHRinsider08.html>

*Sandra Larkin My story*



“I need to be honest; I think you have a brain tumor. I’m sending you for an MRI. The massive headaches and vision loss you are experiencing are indications that there may be a brain tumor present.”

Sitting on the physician’s exam table in June of 2004, I tried to take in the initial diagnosis. I wasn’t thinking about the company I worked for in terms of their goals, projects, my direct reports or how much work I left at the office. All I was thinking was, “How did I get here?” A flood of emotion as well as anger filled my thoughts. I took pride each day in making small consistent changes towards health. How could this happen to me?

Days after the MRI was performed, I was back in the doctor’s office sitting on the same exam table waiting for him to enter the room. Would it be good news or bad? What would happen to my family? Is this going to hurt? Am I going to die?

Ultimately, what he would tell me would change the course of my life. As my doctor entered the room, I examined his face. His expression was not stressed. His brow wasn’t furrowed but he also wasn’t smiling. He began, “I’m happy to report you don’t have a brain tumor. All of your symptoms are caused from a toxic stress combination. You will need to quit your job tomorrow in order to live to see your daughter graduate from high school. If stress is producing these types of symptoms on the outside, what’s it doing to the inside of your body? This includes your heart, arteries and internal organs. You need to make drastic changes, immediately, to live.”

What? Quit my job? That’s crazy. I love my job. My boss is a great mentor. I enjoy the people I work with and can manage just fine. So what if I have a few headaches and can’t see sometimes? Also, the extreme acid reflux I have been dealing with is under control on prescription medication. Hey, that’s why they make prescription drugs. So what if my company does not offer any type of wellness program. I guess I should be glad that I have a job and shouldn’t look to them for help in health and wellness. Intense job stress? I guess that’s the price we pay. It doesn’t matter that I’m not

getting any management relief from project conflicts that include people conflict too. Hit or miss professional training is fine with me. I don't have time, anyway. What's he talking about when he says a "toxic stress combination"?

Let's take a look at my typical day.

- Wake up at 3:30 a.m. to exercise and meditate
- Get ready for work and leave by 6:30 a.m.
- Drive 37 miles one way in Chicago traffic
- Work a ten hour day which includes about four to six hours of meetings
- Walk at lunch time then graze on a salad all afternoon
- Go to the convenience store in the building at 3:00 p.m. with a few of my colleagues for chocolate and junk food
- Drive 37 miles back home in the same Chicago traffic
- Make dinner and take care of my family while I'm exhausted
- Go to bed by 10:00 p.m. or sometimes at 7:00 p.m.

Humm... is this the toxic stress combination he was talking about?

Does it include ...

- Grocery shopping
- Running errands
- Paying bills
- Cleaning
- Attending school events
- Homework
- Socializing with friends
- Trying to maintain a marriage relationship
- Traveling for business
- Maintaining the household chores with my husband
- Working out solutions to extended family personal and health issues 500 miles away on a daily basis

## *Introduction*

What happened to my own personal wellness plan I had in place? I thought it was working. I'll just ignore what the physician ordered and see what happens next. This can't be as out of control as it appears.

It took an additional six months of being extremely sick to make the decision to resign my company position. In February of 2005, my body and mind could no longer function. The fact remained that I was not getting better but maintaining failing health. In addition, the stress from the job was too much for me to handle.

What did I gain by making the decision to resign and right size my health?

I gained a feeling of loss and triumph but not at the same time. Loss from a job I loved and health gained within three months of my resignation. Right after I resigned, I signed up for a three month daily boot camp at my fitness club. I was GI Jane—it was extremely intense both physically and mentally. Mentally, it cleared my mind of the intensity with which I was pursuing life and career. It removed me from a job situation that was no longer healthy for me and was not negotiable. Daily, I would apply heat to some areas of my body and ice to others.

At the end of the three months, my stress symptoms were gone. I lost two dress sizes and my clinical readings were normal. Then, I began the healing process with my family members who also took a direct hit from my stress.

What did my company lose in the process?

My company lost ....

- An eight-year, mid-level manager who was passionate about the job, the company, its people and customers
- A 20 year corporate veteran with a broad range of expertise
- A valuable and experienced organizational knowledge base which walked right out the door on February 11, 2005
- A person who was generally liked in the workplace as evidenced by current long term lasting work relationships after the resignation

- A woman who had a passion and dream for the company, then right sized it into a thriving business of her own

We can wonder if the company lost the respect and confidence of other employees as they watched this situation unfold. Was their public image tarnished as employees talked in outside private circles about this situation and what would happen to them if the same events occurred? Was there an underlying current of “what if’s” and lack of respect for senior management at the water cooler? Could someone have done something in the company? I guess we’ll never know.

Keep in mind that my same situation is playing out throughout the world of work daily. Change the place of business and the employee name and you have a “toxic stress combination” that can affect organizational revenue, profit, goal attainment, customer satisfaction, and public image.

In the end, I’ve moved on to a better place physically, emotionally, intellectually, occupationally and socially. That which was life threatening became life changing. I have used this disadvantage to the advantage of others and myself by moving into the workplace wellness arena for the betterment not only of employers but directly helping employees as well.

Sitting on one side of the cubicle—and the other side of the boardroom table—brings a unique perspective on wellness in the workplace. We don’t need to lose the company expertise or invest our total profit margin into a wellness program. Organizations can and should put some well care into the workplace for people to thrive and survive, at the same time helping to create healthy profits in people and, ultimately, in the bottom line.

**Sandra Larkin**, CWPM is uniquely qualified to provide objective direction, creativity and strategic direction in planning and delivering wellness initiatives to achieve profit-focused objectives. She maintains key partnerships in her global strategic network of wellness professionals that provide her client base with a distinct competitive advantage. Sandra is a national motivational speaker and trainer on health and wellness in the workplace. [sandra@sandralarkin.com](mailto:sandra@sandralarkin.com) [www.SandraLarkin.com](http://www.SandraLarkin.com)