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THE SPECTRUM OF WELLNESS



By Leslie Glover

What is wellness? Everyone talking about it, we hear and see the word wellness in the news, on television, at work, it's all over but what is it mean really? There is no universally-accepted definition of wellness; however there seem to be a set of common characteristics seen in most attempts at a definition. We generally see a reference to a "state of well-being," or a "state of acceptance or satisfaction with our present condition."

Wellness is a holistic term, which is described in the Oxford dictionary as the balance of mind, body and spirit. Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a more successful existence. Wellness is not one dimensional but multi dimensional. Wellness is not only about our physical or medical health. There are many

facets to wellness including but not limited to Spiritual, Emotional, Intellectual, Mental, Occupational, etc... Wellness encompasses all aspects of our wellbeing and therefore we cannot achieve wellness if one of these essential pieces is missing or overlooked.

Wellness is nothing new, the term and how the modern world looks at it has however evolved. Wellness activities and lifestyle enhancement has been around since the beginning of time. Cave drawings have been found in France depicting human touch (which some say represent early forms of massage) dating back to 15,000BC.

The ancient Egyptians were known to use modalities of which we may consider wellness activities today including sophisticated bathing rituals and forms of chromotherapy utilizing colored gemstones and sunlight. Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine which are completely holistic

WELLNESS IS A "STATE OF WELL-BEING"

approaches to wellness date back thousands of years. Mineral rich waters have been used to improve health throughout time; Thermalism in Europe, Thalassotherapy in France, Onsen tradition in Japan, Hammam tradition in North Africa and the Middle East. Native Americans used to bath in mineral springs in many locations across North America.

The modern western world seems to have chosen to adopt a principally one dimensional medically oriented perspective of health and wellness and therefore looked at primarily curative solutions to health. Most western medical care is focused on illness and disease care. Allowing the person to get ill and then trying to treat the symptoms.

Whereas Eastern civilizations seemed to retain more balance in their approach to wellness considering preventative measures as well as curative. TCM and Ayurveda are two examples of approaches that focus on keeping a person in good health and preventing disease or illness from ever existing.

If a person does get sick then they are treated with generally non-invasive methods first which aim to strengthen the energies needed

to retain optimum balance and therefore health. The actual source of the illness or sickness is evaluated and then treated holistically.

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The word "wellness" can be traced back to as early as the 1650's; however the "wellness" movement really began almost 300 years later in the 1950's when new approaches to healthy living began to emerge which were perhaps inspired by the preamble to the World Health Organization's 1948 constitution which said : "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

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In 1950 the word gained popularity when Halbert L. Dunn, M.D., began using the phrase "high level wellness" and introduced the concept in

a series of twenty-nine lectures. Those lectures provided the basis for his book, titled High Level Wellness, which was published in 1961.

During the 1960's, Raoul Andrews Sudre, began his spa consulting career and helped develop many spa and wellness locations throughout the world. Being the visionary that he is he incorporated many wellness elements in various projects which would eventually help shape the future of the industry.

WELLNESS IS A "STATE OF ACCEPTANCE WITH OUR CONDITION"

In 1975 a young doctor by the name of John Travis, opened the Wellness Resource Center in California. Opening the door and people's minds to wellness and integrative approaches to health and wellbeing.

Interestingly enough the word itself was still very rarely heard in everyday language as just one year later in 76' during a "60 minutes" special, Dan Rather spoke of the word as though it were alien; "Wellness," There's a word you don't hear every day."

In the late 70's fat farms began to rise with the Oaks at Ojai in California being one of the first. Fat farms as they were referred to soon inspired new visions and in 1979 the first Canyon Ranch was opened in Tucson, Arizona.

Canyon Ranch incorporated similar philosophies of the fat farms including an emphasis on nutrition and exercise however expanded the concept to include many integrative healing modalities.

The increase of interest in areas such as aerobic exercise and gymnastics in the 80's; only

emphasized this movement towards caring for ourselves in a more holistic/multidimensional way. In 1984, the Berkeley Wellness Letter was born and shortly after in the late eighties early 90's the spa movement really began to take shape.

Many industries contribute to the wellness movement, but with studies such as the global spa economy report we can evaluate and or at least get some perspective of the magnitude. It is important when reading spa statistics to assume that there will be some discrepancies in the numbers depending on the source from which the information is collected and how terms are defined. For example one study may define spas one way and only include spas with a hydrotherapy component; others may define spas as something different and include everything from nail studios and glorified beauty salons with an esthetic room in the back.

Interestingly enough at the same time Eastern methodologies started to become a bit more socially acceptable in the west. We began to hear more and more about yoga and tai chi, meditation and even acupuncture. In 1995 the first Asian destination spa was opened in Hua Hin Thailand called Chiva Som.

Due to its location, holistic concept, eastern philosophies, east meets west treatments and of course the famous Thai hospitality, Chiva Som soon became one of the premier wellness destinations in the world.

At the turn of the 21st century; it seems

WELLNESS was on everyone's mind. The Boom was here and only seemed to be gaining popularity. To illustrate this boom, in the year 2000 the International Spa Association (ISPA) engaged Price Waterhouse Coopers to conduct

WELLNESS IS A "BALANCE OF MIND BODY & SPIRIT"

the inaugural spa industry study. The study revealed that in the year 2001 there were 9,600 spa locations in the US, and just seven years later in 2008 the number of spa locations in the US doubled to 21,300.

In 2007 the first global study of the spa economy was performed by the Stanford research Institute, a non profit independent organization.

The study was presented and the information first released at the 2008 Global Spa Summit in NYC. The study helped reveal the magnitude of the global spa & wellness industry.

I say spa & wellness as in the report spas are described as, "establishments that promote wellness through the provision of therapeutic and other professional services aimed at renewing the body mind and spirit." The study concluded that the spa economy totaled \$255 Billion dollars globally. If you extend the description and include other wellness related industries including beauty, fitness and nutrition the numbers jump to upwards of 1 Trillion globally.

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Because there is no uniform and or universally accepted definition for spa; the spa industry is hard to quantify and the numbers can be a bit tricky to navigate. None the less, it is clear that the spa industry is robust and growing.

Why is the wellness boom happening Now? Now, because it cannot be ignored anymore; with the stresses of everyday life, societal influences and wellbeing ignored, we as humans and as a society have become completely out of balance.

As we look at American society today there are some evident deviances, some of which have reached epidemic proportions like obesity. The world health organization states that Globally, there are more than 1 billion overweight adults and at least 300 million of them are clinically/morbidly obese. The Center for Disease Control and prevention (CDC) has released new figures that show 1/3 of Americans over the age of 20 are obese!

As a result of these figures we are beginning to see some new shifts such as the return of "fat farms" and the introduction of diet consultants, with a number of physical activities aimed at calorie burning. We are also seeing schools implement healthier food in their cafeterias and eliminate high calorie/high sugar soft drink filled vending machines.

WELLNESS IS A "PROCESS TOWARD A SUCCESSFUL EXISTENCE"

Another factor which is only adding to our stress levels is the cultural phobia of "touch". The touch factor, so necessary in life for human beings is disappearing from everyday encounters.

Corporations fearing lawsuits forbid their employees to touch or to interact naturally. Schools ostracize children who hug creating a hostile environment that needs to be relieved. Indirectly I believe this phobia of touch also translates into the difficulty to cope with sexuality. Nothing is more natural than the urges of reproduction and sexual energy is considered paramount in most Asian cultures; but some Western countries have a strong Victorian heritage that forces them to struggle with sexual matters which can cause major psychological and even physical dysfunctions.

Society has become so out of balance that we have begun to see major effects transpire as illustrated above. Spas and or wellness centers as more and more they will be referred to in the future have an avocation of being the conduit to better health through prevention and improved lifestyles.

Today, in most cases, the reason people go to spas is to find an environment that will promote wellbeing, improve health and make them happier! Spas generally are a place of respite and offer a break from everyday stresses.

Thus, today the experience is sometimes just as or even more important than the treatment; the ambiance found in a spa, the service, the

attention that one gets and is looking for are the formulas for success. All of this in most cases can be achieved without the participation of doctors or medical staff! Because people who go to spas are not sick. They just want to feel better in their head, in their body, and for the most part do not want to be reminded of clinics or hospitals! It is clear that due to such issues as poor customer service, high costs and too much bureaucracy that there will be more and more spas/wellness centers emerging in order to fill a needed gap in our personal and social wellness.

The numbers are already on the rise in terms of the percentage of Americans currently using some form of complimentary and or alternative medicine otherwise known as CAM. Upwards of 38 percent of Americans already use some type of complimentary and or alternative medicine.

CAM includes a variety of wellness modalities including but not limited to acupuncture, acupressure, chakra balancing, cupping, herbal medicine, meditation, massage, osteopathy, vibration therapy, etc...

Without a doubt, the inclusion of yoga, Tai-chi and Chi-Kong reflects the East meets West trend, but it is also reflective of people's new perception that Health and Wellness can be obtained by indulging in far Eastern philosophies where energy dominates physiology. There are numerous treatments in Ayurveda, some based on Traditional Chinese Medicine that can alleviate many of the issues discussed above before they become out of control problems.

WELLNESS IS "NOT ONE DIMENSIONAL BUT MULTI-DIMENSIONAL"

How will wellness affect the spa world? Spas/wellness centers have an avocation of being the conduit to better health through prevention and improved lifestyles..

As medical care is primarily focused on disease care, spas can provide a more proactive approach to health with a focus on prevention.

Spas are also the perfect venue to educate and offer personal consultations in order to help individuals determine the most appropriate method to achieve balance.

The spa/wellness industry must adapt in the future in order to meet these demands by becoming more specialized.

A spa/wellness center in most cases in a business, therefore it must be conceptualized and developed as one.

There is a certain chronology to spa development that needs to be followed in order to be successful.

A good comparison for those not too savvy about the spa industry is the restaurant industry. Just like a good restaurant, a spa cannot be a jack of all trades and offer the best of everything i.e for example you wouldn't expect a French restaurant to have the best

Brazilian and Mexican, Chinese food. No they must focus their efforts in order to offer the most authentic and satisfactory services to their specific market and or markets.

This is the same in the spa industry; we must focus our efforts and develop concepts and offer services which cater to our specific markets.

Market needs will change depending on many things so it is important to perform a market study and hire a qualified spa consultant to develop a soft feasibility study if you are considering developing a spa.

In the future spas and wellness centers will begin specializing in specific areas or genres such as weight management, nutrition and diet, mental health, detoxification and drug abuse, sexuality and sexual dysfunctions, relationships and emotional health,

enhancing brain power/activity and much more.

Spas/wellness centers can respond quite adequately to the "ills" of our times as they will be the most appropriate venue able to deliver some of the necessary ingredients to attain the balance that is the "secret" ingredient to better mental, physical, and spiritual health. ■

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