

Well-being

Session #2 within “Health” Unit



VETERANS

ONWARD

Training Materials:

- Whiteboard and pens or flipchart and pens.
- Paper and pen for all participants.
- Access to printouts / email link to Quality of Life Index – Generic Version (QLI-G) which can be accessed at <https://www.midss.org/content/ferrans-and-powers-quality-life-index-generic-version-qli-g>
- Sticky notes.

Learning Objectives:

1. To define well-being and to name and describe the 7 domains of well-being.
2. To assess one's own level of well-being.
3. To identify commonly identified issues related to veterans' well-being, and how well-being can be hampered during the Military to Civilian Transition (MCT).
4. To identify and experience a range of strategies to support well-being as a transitioning service member

Training Script:

Hello everyone, how are you today? My name is _____. I am going to be your tutor today for this training module on Well-being. It is the second of three modules within the “Health” unit. In the last session on Mind-Body connection, we saw how our psychological health and our emotional and mental health are linked. We saw that self-care strategies and paying attention to our own emotional and mental well-being, as well as our physical well-being, contributes to health.

Today's module will take between 90 and 120 minutes to complete.

You will need a pen and paper to jot down your own ideas and thoughts in response to some of the tasks.

Before we look at this session's learning objectives, are there any points, questions or queries based on our last session? Have you had any thoughts since last session about our learning? Did you give Yoga a try?

[Allow 5-10 minutes as needed for facilitated discussion].

Our learning objectives for today's session are:

1. To define well-being and to name and describe the 7 domains of well-being.
2. To assess one's own level of well-being.
3. To identify commonly identified issues related to veterans' well-being, and how well-being can be hampered during the Military to Civilian Transition (MCT).
4. To identify and experience a range of strategies to support well-being as a transitioning service member.

We will make a start on learning objective 1:

1. To define well-being and to name and describe the 7 domains of well-being.

Well-being is a keyword in the World Health Organisation's definition of health:

*"a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"*¹

In this way, well-being can be seen as a way of speaking about our health which includes our physical, emotional and mental health. Well-being means more than simply an absence of pain or distress. It involves something positive, the presence of something, rather than simply the absence of pain.

¹ Preamble to the Constitution of WHO as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19 June - 22 July 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of WHO, no. 2, p. 100).

Well-being is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as:

“the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.”

It is important to realise that well-being is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. Whilst it does include happiness, it also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life as a whole, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel. In this respect, the New Economics Foundation describes well-being as the following:

“Well-being can be understood as how people feel and how they function, both on a personal and a social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.”²

A really simple way to describe well-being is that it is the sense of “a life well-lived”. A person can experience physical health problems, or mental health problems, and also feel a sense of well-being. A helpful diagram that shows this conception of how illness and well-being can both be experienced comes from a paper produced by American Sociologist, Corey Keyes, called “from languishing to



² New Economics Foundation (2012) *Measuring Well-being: A guide for practitioners*, London: New Economics Foundation.

*Figure 1: Keyes' 2002 conception of mental health and well-being*³

flourishing in life” (see figure 1). In this model, even if we experience illness, we can still flourish: that experience is a sense of well-being, or a sense of thriving. Likewise, even in good health, we can experience what Keyes calls languishing: simply surviving, rather than thriving.

We can speak of different domains or spheres of well-being. We may experience high levels of well-being in most, but a low level of well-being in another. There are various ways to categorise the different domains, or spheres of well-being. Today we will look at two models that divide well-being into different domains.

The first of these comes from a study called “The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study”, produced in 2014⁴.

In this study, there was a focus on Military Transition Theory (MTT) and ways in which it was possible to assess how successful veterans were in making the transition from military life to civilian life. In this report, the domains of work, family, health, general well-being and community were the ways in which transition is assessed. These can be seen as categories of well-being. (See figure 2 for a helpful graphic which outlines some of the ideas, and findings from the Los Angeles County Veterans study).

³ Keyes, C.L.M. (2002, June). The Mental Health Continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), 207-222.

⁴ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280238705_The_state_of_the_American_veteran_The_Los_Angeles_county_veterans_study#fullTextFileContent

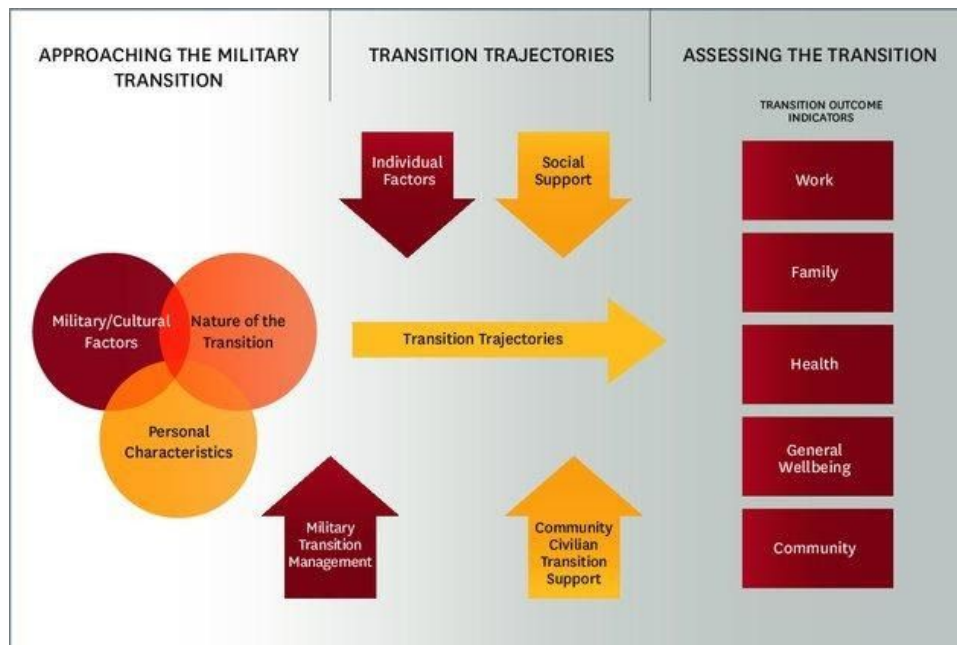


Figure 2: Framework for MTT

A second framework to help us understand the domains of well-being, comes from a report, produced by the Veteran Affairs Department in Canada⁵. This document in 2016 Produced by Jim Thompson and other researchers provides a well-being construct for veterans' policy. There are seven domains identified as factors of well-being. These are:

1. Employment, or other meaningful activity.
2. Finances.
3. Health.
4. Life skills and preparedness.
5. Social integration.
6. Housing and physical environment.
7. Cultural and social environment.

Let's take a look at each of these in turn in order to describe what each domain includes. As we think about each domain, I will also identify some of the commonly identified issues related to veterans'

⁵Thompson, J.M., MacLean, M.B., Roach, M.B., Banman, M., Mabior, J., Pedlar, D., Charlottetown, P.E. (2016). *A Well-Being Construct for Veterans' Policy, Programming and Research*. Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada.
<http://www.cimvhr.ca/documents/Thompson%202016%20Well-Being%20Tech%20Report%20FINAL%2007Sept2016.pdf>

well-being, and how well-being can be hampered during the Military to Civilian Transition (MCT). In this way, we will also be covering learning objective 3:

3. To identify commonly identified issues related to veterans' well-being, and how well-being can be hampered during the Military to Civilian Transition (MCT).

1. Employment, or other meaningful activity.

It's accepted widely that having a good job, or some meaningful activity in our life gives us a sense of purpose, which is a factor in good well-being. Nearly 8 in 10 service members leave the military without a job⁶. The average age of release for military service in many nations is age 40 or less. Therefore, veterans have many years of potential productivity ahead of them. Therefore, finding ways to gain a sense of meaning and purpose in life through work or volunteering in some way, can be very beneficial for well-being.

2. Finances.

Personal financial status has been widely accepted as a factor in well-being. For Veterans in MCT, there is likely to be some initial reduction or change in level of income which can impact well-being. Over one-third of veterans report financial troubles, many of which began during military service⁷. Sufficient finances allow us to make choices around a healthy lifestyle, the health services we access, the leisure time we enjoy, as well as helping with housing, food, and the practical needs of life. Veterans may have little experience of having to plan and manage finances. Therefore, gaining skills around management of finances and financial planning , can be an important factor in supporting well-being.

⁶ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*.

⁷ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*

3. Health.

Physical and mental health problems challenge good well-being. Whilst we can have good well-being with physical and mental health problems, if we feel in pain or ill it can be harder to think positively and feel good about life. Disability may mean that we find it difficult to navigate the social landscape: some services that we would like to access are not always inclusive and can therefore disadvantage a person with a disability. We call this a barrier in the social environment. Health is an important consideration for veterans. Many service members leave active duty with untreated mental and physical health issues. 5 in 10 military veterans report a significant physical or mental health issue for which they are not receiving care. 1 in 10 veterans have considered suicide or made a plan to end their life by suicide⁸. Therefore, good health, as well as services that allow for inclusive access can be important in supporting positive well-being.

4. Life skills, and preparedness.

Well-being also draws upon the skills, knowledge and insights that we have that can make life easier. Skills such as managing money, meal planning, personal health practices, skills to help in the workplace, etc. It is for this reason that education can support well-being in that it helps us to develop important skills.

5. Social integration.

Social isolation challenges our sense of well-being. It is widely recognised that social networks and social relationships are important to well-being. For those undertaking Military to Civilian Transition (MCT), there may well be changes to a person's social networks and social relationships. Therefore, finding ways to develop positive social networks can be an important factor in improving well-being.

6. Housing and physical environment.

⁸ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*.

It is a basic human need to experience warmth, shelter and safety. Suitable housing contributes to our sense of well-being. If we live in poor housing or temporary accommodation, it can be difficult to foster a sense of well-being. A significant number of service members (at least 40%) leave the military without having identified permanent housing⁹. For this reason, seeking support with housing can be an important self-help step towards increasing our own well-being.

7. Cultural and social environment

We live within a culture as human beings. Cultures include the values and norms that have been accepted by the majority of people within that culture. Having a good understanding of what the expectations and norms for the society we find ourselves living in can make it easier to navigate that society. This can in turn lead to increased well-being. This can be difficult for people facing MCT as the values and norms of civilian society may be different to the military culture that the person has been used to. Increasing our understanding and awareness of the cultural and social environment we find ourselves in can support well-being.

We are now ready to move on to learning objective 2:

2. Assess our own level of well-being.

For this, we are going to use an assessment tool, commonly used as a way of assessing well-being, or quality of life. This is a measure that we'll be able to undertake ourselves in order to gain self-awareness about our own quality of life and well-being, so that we're in a position to make changes as needed. This assessment tool is called the Quality of Life Index. It has been shown that quality of life is a reliable marker of a patient or a person's own sense of health and well-being. Quality of Life can be defined as a person's sense of well-being, that stems from satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the areas of life that are important to him or her. For this reason, when we have a go at this assessment, you will be asked a series of questions, which will focus on your levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. There are no right or wrong answers, simply go with the best fit for you.

⁹ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*.

Task:

[Provide online or paper copies of the assessment tool.

Allow participants 5 to 10 minutes to undertake the assessment. Following this, lead a facilitated discussion in which participants can share and discuss the findings of their questionnaire]

Task:

Having completed the Quality of Life Index assessment, we will now consider, from the seven domains of well-being previously identified, in which areas you experienced the highest levels of well-being. Also, in which domains you experience the lowest levels of well-being.

Remember the 7 domains of well-being are:

1. Employment, or other meaningful activity.
2. Finances.
3. Health.
4. Life skills and preparedness.
5. Social integration.
6. Housing and physical environment.
7. Cultural and social environment

Take five minutes to jot down your thoughts about the domain(s) in which you sense you experience high and also low levels of well-being.

From this, set yourself a single goal: what is the one thing you want to do as a result of this understanding to improve your own well-being?

Try to make your goal a SMART goal. That is, make it specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely.

[Allow participants 5 to 10 minutes to undertake the task. Following this, lead a facilitated discussion in which participants can share their goals].

Our final learning objective for this session is:

4. To identify and experience a range of strategies to support well-being as a transitioning service member.

Before we begin to look at some of the strategies identified in official reports, I'd love to hear your own ideas and views. You will already have your own ideas and tried and tested well-being tips.

Task:

Thinking of the 7 domains of well-being, take time to write down tips or ideas for supporting well-being. Write each tip on a separate sticky note. We will then compile the ideas.

[Provide each participant with a selection of sticky notes.

Allow five minutes for participants to note down their ideas.

Following this invite participants to place their sticky note on the display at the front.

Under each of the seven headings, of the domains of well-being.

Following this lead a facilitated discussion around the ideas].

Let's look at some of the strategies for supporting veterans' well-being identified in the American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study", produced in 2014¹⁰.

Consider accessing services and support that will assist with job opportunities. For example, speaking to a career advisor can help you to identify the career opportunities available to you and how you might be able to apply the existing transferable skills that you can bring to the workplace.

To support physical and psychological well-being, it can be helpful to access health evaluations.

When health check-ups are offered, it is an act of self-care to attend appointments and to engage with this process. Some people express that they are reluctant to disclose physical or psychological health issues, because of the fear of continuing stigma. However, by identifying any psychological or physical health care issues, support can then be offered. There are also lots of practical steps such as engaging in physical activity, staying within healthy limits for alcohol consumption and avoiding tobacco and other drug use can also help to support physical and psychological well-being.

There are now a number of schemes, offering civilian military transition mentors within local communities. Again, where this service or facility is offered, it can be supportive of well-being to access and make good use of this resource. These schemes are often peer-to-peer schemes: with veterans who have previously transitioned to civilian life ready to mentor new veterans. It is also possible to consider ways that you can volunteer to benefit veterans or other people in society, which can provide a way to engage and connect with others.

And there are also well-being strategies contained within the Canadian Report referenced earlier¹¹:

Consider your expectations regarding MCT. Having realistic expectations about employment prospects, initial housing opportunities, and so on, can help you in transitioning. Discussing your

¹⁰ Castro, C.A, Kintzle, S., Hassan, A. M., Chica, J. (2014) *The American Veteran: Los Angeles County Veteran Study*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280238705_The_state_of_the_American_veteran_The_Los_Angeles_county_veterans_study#fullTextFileContent

¹¹ Thompson, J.M., MacLean, M.B., Roach, M.B., Banman, M., Mabior, J., Pedlar, D., Charlottetown, P.E. (2016). *A Well-Being Construct for Veterans' Policy, Programming and Research*. Research Directorate, Veterans Affairs Canada.

expectations with other people engaged in the process of transitioning and veterans who have made the transition to civilian life can help you to gain a sense of whether your expectations are realistic, or not.

Consider the social networks that you can build and develop to support your own well-being. Social Networks may be informal, consisting of friends and family, or formal, consisting of peer support or agency and organisational staff. Consider how you can cultivate and grow your support network.

Consider your identity as a veteran. It can be difficult to integrate your former identity as a serving member of the forces with your new identity as a veteran within the civilian context. Veterans who have a higher level of well-being manage to adjust and integrate their military identity within their identity as a civilian. For some people, chatting with a trusted friend or even keeping a journal about the challenges of adapting and integrating to civilian life can support the process of transition.

Task:

We previously identified our own tips or ideas for supporting well-being, with a focus on the 7 domains of well-being. Having heard some other strategies from the 2 reports we have covered, now consider what other ideas you can now note on sticky notes. Again, write each tip on a separate sticky note. We will then compile the ideas.

[Provide each participant with a selection of sticky notes.

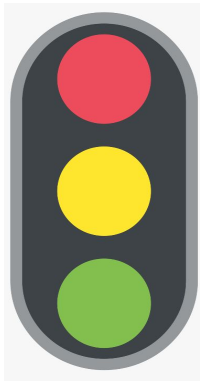
Allow five minutes for participants to note down their ideas.

Following this invite participants to place their sticky note on the existing display at the front.

Under each of the seven headings, of the domains of well-being.

Following this lead a facilitated discussion around the ideas].

We have now covered all the learning outcomes for this session. We are going to take time to evaluate your own learning today, using a simple traffic light system. For each objective, you are going to decide whether you feel you are:



RED / STOP	You have made no progress in learning this and are still at a “standstill.”
AMBER	You have some understanding but aren’t quite ready to apply it yet.
GREEN / GO	You have a good grasp of this objective and are ready to go and apply this learning in the real world.

1. To define well-being and to name and describe the 7 domains of well-being.

RED AMBER GREEN

2. To assess one's own level of well-being.

RED AMBER GREEN

3. To identify commonly identified issues related to veterans’ well-being, and how well-being can be hampered during the Military to Civilian Transition (MCT).

RED AMBER GREEN

4. To identify and experience a range of strategies to support well-being as a transitioning service member

RED AMBER GREEN

What do you want to do as a result of your learning today?

Thank you to everyone for your engagement and participation in the session. I hope you have learnt some useful ideas that can be applied in your daily life.