Behavior Change Activities
Following a Healthy Lifestyle
Students who take a personal health course usually want to improve their health behavior. Prevention magazine offers an excellent general health website that addresses subjects such as health, weight loss and fitness, food, and community. The content varies, but it’s always useful and worthwhile. Click on www.healthydoas.com, and choose a path that interests you.

Exploring Lifestyle Links
If you’re seeking information on a multitude of lifestyle choices, this is the site for you. Topics include fitness, weight, exercise, food, nutrition, yoga, material arts, and sports clubs. Click on www.wellness.com, and choose lifestyles to find links to each of these areas. Choose your favorite link, and explore the topic in detail.


may unfold in the context of dating relationships, close friendships, and certainly mentoring relationships.

Involvement in intimate relationships varies, with some people having many relationships and others having only one or two. The number does not matter. From a developmental standpoint, what matters is that we have others with whom to share our most deeply held thoughts and feelings as we attempt to validate our own unique approach to living.

Related Developmental Tasks of Young Adulthood
In addition to the five developmental tasks of young adulthood just described, two additional areas of growth and development seem applicable to 18- to 24-year-olds. These include obtaining entry-level employment and the developing of parenting skills.

For at least the last sixty years, students in increasing numbers have pursued a college education in large part to gain entry into many occupations and professions. Students of today certainly anticipate that a college degree will open doors for their first substantial employment or entry-level employment.

In many respects employment needs go beyond those associated purely with money. Employment provides the opportunity to assume new responsibilities in which the skills learned in college can be applied and expanded. Employment also involves taking on new roles (such as colleague, mentor, mentee, or partner) that may play an important part in the way we define ourselves for the remainder of our lives. In addition, employment provides a new, more independent arena in which friendships (intimacy) can be pursued. By no means least important, entry-level employment provides the financial foundation on which we can establish independence.

For many people, young adulthood marks the entry to parenthood, one of the most important responsibilities anyone can choose to assume. The multitude of decisions associated with this commitment will, naturally, shape the remainder of one’s life. Examples of these decisions are whether to parent or not, and, if so, when to begin, how many children to have, what interval between children, and what role parenting will play in the context of overall adulthood. The ability to make sound decisions and to develop the skills and insights necessary to parent effectively may be the most challenging aspect of growth and development that confronts young adults.

The Multiple Dimensions of Health
In an earlier section of the chapter your authors promised a new definition of health that would be less focused on morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) than most others. Before we do this, however, let us introduce a multidimensional concept of health (or holistic health)—a requirement for any definition of health that moves beyond the cure/prevention of illness and the postponement of death.

Key Terms

holistic health a view of health in terms of its physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual makeup.
Although not interested in illness or premature death, wellness practitioners find it critically important that they inform their clients about the role of elevated blood pressure in the development of cardiovascular disease.

Although our modern health care community too frequently acts as if the structure and function of the physical body is the sole basis of health, common experience supports the validity of a holistic nature to health. In this section we will examine six component parts, or dimensions, of health, all interacting in a synergistic manner allowing us to engage in the wide array of life experiences.

Physical Dimension
Most of us have a number of physiological and structural characteristics we can call on to aid us in accomplishing the wide array of activities that characterize a typical day, and, on occasion, a not so typical day. Among these physical characteristics are our body weight, visual ability, strength, coordination, level of endurance, level of susceptibility to disease, and powers of recuperation. In certain situations the physical dimension of health may be the most important. This almost certainly is why traditional medicine for centuries has equated health with the design and operation of the body.

Emotional Dimension
We also possess certain emotional characteristics that can help us through the demands of daily living. The emotional dimension of health encompasses our ability to cope with stress, remain flexible, and compromise to resolve conflict. For young adults, growth and development often give rise to emotional vulnerability, which may lead to feelings of rejection and failure that can reduce productivity and satisfaction. To some extent we are all affected by feeling states, such as anger, happiness, fear, empathy, guilt, love, and hate. People who consistently try to improve their emotional health appear to enjoy life to a much greater extent than do those who let feelings of vulnerability overwhelm them or block their creativity.

Social Dimension
A third dimension of health encompasses social skills and insights. Initially, family interactions, school experiences, and peer group interactions foster social skill development, but future social interactions will demand additional skill development and refinement of already existing skills and insights. In adulthood, including young adulthood, the composition of the social world changes, principally because of our exposure to a wider array of people and the expanded roles associated with employment, parenting, and community involvement. The social abilities of many nontraditional-age students may already be firmly established. Entering college may encourage them to develop new social skills that help them socialize with their traditional-age student colleagues. After being on campus for a while, nontraditional-age students are often able to interact comfortably with traditional-age students in such diverse places as the library, the student center, and the bookstore. This interaction enhances the social dimension of health for both types of students.

Intellectual Dimension
The ability to process and act on information, clarify values and beliefs, and exercise decision-making capacity ranks among the most important aspects of total health. In fact, for many college-educated persons, this dimension of health may prove to be the most important and satisfying of the six. In fact, for all of us, at least on certain occasions, this will hold true. Our ability to analyze, synthesize, hypothesize, and then act upon new information enhances the quality of our lives in multiple ways.

Spiritual Dimension
The fifth dimension of health is the spiritual dimension. Although certainly it includes religious beliefs and practices,
Faith can include religious practice, but it can also be quite distinct from it. Faith is the most fundamental stage in the human quest for the meaning of life. It's a developing focus of the total person that gives purpose and meaning to life.

By the time people reach college age, their faith may have already placed them in uncomfortable situations. Taking seriously their responsibility for their own commitments, lifestyles, beliefs, and attitudes, they've had to make some difficult personal decisions. This demands objectivity and a certain amount of independence. It requires finding a balance between personal aspirations and a developing sense of service to others. Finally, the symbols and doctrines of faith must be translated into personalized spiritual concepts that become part of everyday living.

- Have you had any experiences that show you're growing in your faith?
- Do you consider yourself more spiritual or less spiritual than your friends or family members?
- What school-related experiences have affected the spiritual dimension of your health most powerfully?

Many young adults would expand it to encompass more diverse belief systems, including relationships with other living things, the nature of human behavior, and the need and willingness to serve others. All are important components of spiritual health.

Through nurturing the spiritual dimension of our health, we may develop an expanded perception of the universe and better define our relationship to all that it contains, including other people. To achieve growth in the spiritual dimension of health, many people undertake a serious study of doctrine associated with established religious groups and will assume membership in a community of faith. For others, however, spiritual growth is believed to occur, in the absence of a theist-based belief system, as they open themselves to new experiences that involve nature, art, body movement, or stewarding of the environment.

Interestingly, the role of the spiritual dimension of health was given an increased measure of credence when studies published in the scientific literature, including a statistical review of forty-two earlier studies, demonstrated a consistently longer life for persons who regularly participated in religious practices, particularly for women.23,24 This was true even when factors such as smoking, alcohol use, and income were statistically eliminated. Contradictory to these findings, however, was a report suggesting that the ability of prescriptive prayer (prayers of intercession) to enhance healing and extend life could not be supported by current research due to design flaws in the studies made to date.25

Occupational Dimension

A significant contribution made by the currently popular wellness movement is that it defines for many people the importance of the workplace to their sense of well-being. In today's world, employment and productive efforts play an increasingly important role in how we perceive ourselves and how we see the "goodness" of the world in which we live. In addition, the workplace serves as both a testing ground for and a source of life-enhancing skills. In its place of employment we gain not only the financial resources to meet our demands for both necessities and luxuries, but also an array of useful skills like conflict resolution, experiences in shared responsibility, and intellectual growth that can be used to facilitate a wide range of nonemployment-related interactions. In turn, the workplace is enhanced by the healthfulness of the individuals who contribute to its endeavors.

Wellness

Expanded perceptions of health are the basis for wellness. Recall that episodic health care, preventive medicine, and community health promotion are directly aligned with concerns over morbidity and mortality, while health promotion at the individual level is focused on aspects of appearance, weight management, body composition, and physical performance capabilities. Wellness differs from these kinds of health care because it virtually has no interest in morbidity and mortality.

Practitioners describe wellness as a process of extending information, counseling, assessment, and lifestyle modification strategies, leading to a desirable change in the recipients' overall lifestyle, or the adoption of a wellness lifestyle. Once adopted, the wellness lifestyle produces a sense of well-being (also called wellness) that in turn enables recipients to unlock their full potential.

**Key Terms**

**wellness** the promotion and achievement of optimal health, including physical, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, and occupational well-being.
This explanation of how wellness differs from episodic health care, preventive medicine, and health promotion does, on first hearing, seem progressive and clearly devoid of interest in morbidity and mortality concerns. But in practice, wellness programs are not all that different from other kinds of health care. Your authors have consistently noted that wellness programs, as carried out on college campuses, in local hospital wellness centers, and in corporate settings, routinely transmit familiar health-related information and engage in the same risk-reduction activities that characterize preventive medicine and health promotion. It is in the final aspect of wellness, the "unlocking of full potential," that wellness differs from other concepts of health. More than the absence of chronic illness, it involves achieving optimal health across all six of the dimensions of health discussed in the previous section.

A New Definition of Health

At the beginning of the chapter we asked you to consider a new way to view health—a view that would be far less centered in morbidity and mortality concerns than traditional concepts of health and even of wellness. The definition that we propose takes into account the differences between what health is for (its role) and what health is (its composition).

The Role of Health

The role of health in our lives is very similar to the role of a car. Much as a car (or other vehicle) takes us to places we need or want to be, health enables us to accomplish the activities that collectively transition us into and through developmental tasks associated with young adulthood (see pages 12 through 15). Recall that the process of moving through each stage of adulthood does not occur simply because of the passage of time, but rather because we actively participate, on a day-to-day basis, in demands of life appropriate to our life stage.

The Composition of Health

Now that you know what the role of health is, its composition can be seen as being more than simply having a body free of illness and apparently destined for a long life. Rather, the composition of health is that of a collection of resources, from each dimension of health (see pages 15 through 17), determined to be necessary for the successful accomplishment of activities that you need or want to do. Some of these needed resources will already be within you (intrinsic), while others will need to come from outside (extrinsic). However, regardless of their origin, once they are accessed and applied to activities, small forward growth steps will occur. Obviously, to recognize what resources are needed, you must be a student of society’s expectations for persons of your age, as well as your own highly personalized developmental aspirations.

Our Definition of Health

By combining the role of health with the composition of health, we offer a new definition of health that we believe is unique to this textbook.

Health is a reflection of your ability to use the intrinsic and extrinsic resources related to each dimension of health to participate fully in the activities that contribute to your growth and development, with the goal of feeling a sense of well-being as you evaluate your progress through life.

In light of this definition, do not be surprised when your textbook asks whether you are resourceful (healthy) enough for the goals you wish to reach, or whether you are healthy enough to sustain a particular behavioral pattern that you have adopted, or whether you are experiencing the sense of well-being to which you aspire.

Taking Charge of Your Health

- Complete the Comprehensive Health Assessment on p. xxxi.
- Develop a plan to modify your behavior in the areas in which you need improvement.
- Take part in a new spiritual activity, such as meditating, creating art or music, or appreciating nature.
- To promote the social dimension of your health, try to meet one new person each week during the semester.
- Choose one developmental task you would like to focus on, such as assuming responsibility, and plan the steps you can follow to progress in this area.
- Volunteer to be an assistant in a community service program, such as a literacy project or a preschool program.