



GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE<sup>TM</sup>  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE



# Mental Wellness: After the Crisis

by Prof. Gerard Bodeker

Chair, Mental Wellness Initiative, Global Wellness Institute, USA;

& Green Templeton College, University of Oxford, UK;

& Dept of Epidemiology, Columbia University New York, USA.

# Mental Health Globally

# Mental Health Globally

We know from the World Health Organization and from global mental health studies that the world is suffering from a mental wellness crisis.

Over one billion people suffer from anxiety, and one in four people experience mental disorders.

The Mental Wellness Initiative (MWI) of the Global Wellness Institute aims to understand those pathways that help people stay well and thrive mentally as well as physically.

The MWI's mission is focused around sharing knowledge for wellness educators and influencers. This is about offering data on evidence-based daily practices that serve as prevention tools; for living our full potential in everyday life.

# Global Mental Health - COVID era

As the world looks to life after COVID-19, mental wellness is a front-burner priority.

More than half of those admitted to hospital in Italy in 2020 with Covid-19 had a psychiatric disorder a month later, with **28% showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, **31% depression** and **42% anxiety**.

Insomnia and obsessive-compulsive symptoms were common.

For those under lockdown in Britain, research published in The Lancet found that young people, women, and those with small children saw their mental health worsen the most.

# Mental Health in China

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the World Health Organization estimated that 54 million people in China were suffering from depression and about 41million were suffering from anxiety disorders.

A recent report from The National Health Commission of China put out  
a call for emergency psychological crisis intervention.

In response, various mental health associations and organizations have established expert teams to compile guidelines and public health educational articles/videos for mental health professionals and the general public alongside with online mental health services.

The National Health Commission of China stated that: “the rapid transmission of the COVID-19 has emerged to mount a serious challenge to the mental health service in China”



# Social Foundations of Wellbeing



# Social Foundations of Wellbeing

The United Nations' World Happiness Report 2017 identified four factors as best representing different aspects of the social foundations of wellbeing.

These are:

**social support**

**freedom to make life choices**

**generosity**

**absence of corruption in government and business**

Among the many findings cited, two key social variables

— social support and volunteering —

are consistently associated with better self-reported health status.

# Mental Wellness & The Brain

A growing number of studies on wellness modalities

– e.g. meditation, yoga, dance -

are finding positive changes in the brains of regular practitioners.

At the heart of this emerging body of research findings is the concept that **the brain can continue to grow and develop new neural pathways and connections well into adulthood.**

This evidence stands in contrast to earlier views that held that brain development ceased in adolescence.



# Brain Plasticity

Neuroplasticity simply means change in the nervous system. It refers to our brain's intrinsic and dynamic ability to continuously alter its structure and function throughout our lifetime.

Neuroplasticity is strongest during our first five years of life.

The underlying mechanism of plasticity is aptly described in the neuroscience axiom -  
"Neurons that fire together, wire together. Neurons that fire apart, wire apart."

We need to engage in activities that are challenging and experiences that are stimulating to our senses, followed by a period of sufficient rest and nourishment necessary for recovery and growth.



MENTAL WELLNESS INITIATIVE  
GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE



GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™

# MENTAL WELLNESS:

PATHWAYS, EVIDENCE AND HORIZONS



# The Mental Wellness Initiative's Messages



# The Mental Wellness Initiative's Messages

We have found in our MWI research is that people  
can **self-manage** their mental wellness.

A wide range of methods and pathways lead to mental wellbeing.

These are documented in our White Paper on Mental Wellness  
as well as in other MWI publications.

They include:

Connection with Nature, Meditation & stress reduction, Sleep  
Integrative Movement, Wellness Nutrition  
Community, including dance, laughter yoga, and art

# Nature Therapy

Scientists have long known that **sunlight can ease depression**, especially Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

A 2007 study from the University of Essex in the U.K. found that a walk in the country reduces depression in 71% of participants.

The researchers found that as little as five minutes in a natural setting, whether walking in a park or gardening in the backyard, improved mood, self-esteem, and motivation.

*([www.webmd.com/balance/features/nature-therapy-ecotherapy](http://www.webmd.com/balance/features/nature-therapy-ecotherapy))*

In a 2010 Japanese study of shinrin-yoku (defined as “taking in the forest atmosphere, or forest bathing”), researchers found that elements of the environment, such as the odor of wood, the sound of running stream water, and the scenery of the forest can provide relaxation and reduce stress. Those taking part in the study experienced lower levels of cortisol, a lower pulse rate, and lower blood pressure.

*(Park et al, 2010. The physiological effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan. Environmental Health and Preventive Medicine, 15:18.)*

# Meditation

Harvard researchers report that meditation is one of the ways to engage in restorative activities that may provide relief for our immune systems, easing the day-to-day stress of a body constantly trying to protect itself.

Evidence shows that this leads to healthier aging.

Changes associated with the practice of meditation include:

**Enhanced neural plasticity**

**Increased grey and white matter development in the brains of meditators**

**Enhanced mental wellbeing reduction of deeply traumatic stress**

**Changes in brain structure and functioning**

**Changes in gene expression and telomere length**

**Reduced age-related decline**

Clearly, meditation stands as a primary pathway for lifelong enhancement of physical and mental wellness.



# Wellness Nutrition

Chronic inflammation is one of the main underlying causes of both physical and mental illness.

Our diet and gut microbiome have important roles in affecting our bodies' inflammatory processes, which impact our brain's health in numerous ways.

Dietary modification incorporating caloric restriction, anti-inflammatory foods, antioxidants, supplements (omega-3 fatty acids, curcumin), and prebiotics/probiotics help support and promote the brain's health and our overall physical health and immunity.

Writing in Lancet Psychiatry Dr Jerome Sarris and colleagues of the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research, report that:

*"A traditional whole-food diet, consisting of higher intakes of foods such as vegetables, fruits, seafood, whole grains, lean meat, nuts, and legumes, with avoidance of processed foods, is more likely to provide the nutrients that afford resiliency against the pathogenesis of mental disorders".*



# The Gut-Brain Axis

# The Gut-Brain Axis

The microbiome-gut-brain axis is emerging as a key pathway for modulating behavior.

The routes of communication between the microbiota and the brain are slowly being identified.

The immune system, altered barrier function, hormone secretion, production of metabolites, activation of enteric nervous system, and vagus nerve are among the pathways being investigated.



# Nutrition and the Brain

A study on cognitive functioning and brain aging found that higher levels of B family vitamins, as well as vitamins C, D, and E were all associated with higher scores on cognitive tests.

The same positive relationship was found for omega-3 fatty acids.

But, people with higher levels of trans fats - found in a variety of junk foods  
– performed more poorly in thinking and memory tests.

Their MRI scans also revealed more brain shrinkage than people who had lower trans fats levels.

The study found that overall, nutrition accounted for 37 percent of the variation in brain volume.

# Herbs for Immunity

Chinese Medicine is built around the goal of strengthening immunity

– the foundation for both preventing and curing illness. Many herbs are used in combination, but some of the best known for enhancing immunity are:

Red dates (*Ziziphus jujuba*;  )

Goji berries (*Lycium chinense*;  ).

Gotu Kolu (*Centella asiatica*;  ),

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*;  )

Astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*;  )

Reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*;  ).

Ginseng. There are many types of this herb, but the most popular are American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*;  ) and Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng*;  ).

# Sleep

Not surprisingly, anxiety and depression are also associated with poor sleep.

And sleep deprivation is clearly linked to heart disease and strokes.

A growing body of scientific and popular literature has focused on the influence of such factors as external light (including from mobile devices), sugary and caffeinated beverages, noise, time of going to bed, etc. on sleep quality.

More than 3,000 studies have shown that poor sleep hurts immunity. New research has found that just one bad night of sleep can reduce immune cells by up to 70 percent.

By contrast, using a newly developed Living Well Index, researchers from Oxford Economics and the National Centre for Social Research in the UK reported in September 2017 that:  
*“A good night’s sleep is worth more than quadrupling your disposable income. Better sleep is the biggest single contributor to living better”.*

Better Sleep programs represent a major opportunity for spa and wellness centers.



# Massage

A meta-analysis was conducted of studies that used random assignment to test the effectiveness of massage therapy (MT).

Mean effect sizes were calculated from 37 studies for 9 dependent variables.

Single applications of MT reduced state anxiety, blood pressure, and heart rate but not negative mood, immediate assessment of pain, and cortisol level.

Multiple applications reduced delayed assessment of pain. Reductions of trait anxiety and depression were MT's largest effects, with a course of MT treatment providing benefits similar in magnitude to those of psychotherapy.

# Anaerobic Exercise Yoga



# Anaerobic Exercise - Yoga

Yoga is an anaerobic form of exercise and has been found in many studies to have beneficial effects with immune (and autoimmune) conditions such as asthma, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, lymphoma, and breast cancer.

Many studies have shown reductions in anxiety and depression with regular practice of yoga.

# Anaerobic Exercise - Tai Chi

Researchers at Tufts Medical Center in Boston analyzed forty different studies of the effects of Tai Chi on psychological wellbeing.

The Tai Chi practitioners in this research ranged from 11 to 85 years of age and included healthy individuals as well as those with chronic conditions.

The analysis found significant reductions in stress, anxiety and depression and enhanced mood.

This and a large body of other research supports the long-held belief that Tai Chi is a beneficial mind/body practice, which relieves stress and improves wellbeing.



# Movement - Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise enables our brain and body to sustain and overcome the negative effects of chronic stress through natural physiological processes that are otherwise switched off during prolonged physical inactivity.

A meta-analysis of exercise and immunity has found the following:

**Acute exercise boosts the immune system and improves defense activity and metabolic health.**

**The higher the level of moderate exercise training,  
the lower is the risk of illness.**

**Exercise training has an anti-inflammatory influence.**

# Movement & Immunity

Exercise training has an anti-inflammatory influence.

Habitual exercise improves immune regulation, delaying the onset of age-related illness and decline.

A study in Malaysia looked at dance exercise, supplemented with honey, which is naturally rich in nutritive polyphenols, and found that combining aerobic dance exercise and honey supplementation produced better effects on immune functioning than aerobic dance exercise or honey supplementation alone.

A group of women are captured in a moment of joy and laughter outdoors. The woman in the foreground, wearing a light brown sweater and a necklace, is laughing heartily with her mouth wide open. Behind her, several other women are also smiling and laughing, some with their arms raised in a playful gesture. They are all dressed in casual, comfortable clothing. The background is slightly blurred, showing more people and what appears to be a grassy area with some structures.

# Community & Connectedness: Laughter



# Community & Connectedness: Laughter

Laughter yoga (Hasyayoga) is a practice involving prolonged voluntary laughter.

Laughter yoga is based on the belief that voluntary laughter provides the same physiological and psychological benefits as spontaneous laughter.

Laughter yoga is done in groups, with eye contact, jokes and playfulness between participants.

Oxford University researchers found that social laughter produced neurophysiological changes, increased pleasurable sensations and triggered endogenous opioid release in the thalamus, caudate nucleus, and anterior insula regions of the brain.

Online laughter is just as therapeutic as laughing in a real social group and offers a new option through laughter yoga for spas and wellness centres.



# Wellness Destinations Post-COVID

The well-known economist and future forecaster Thierry Malleret, wrote recently:

*“Recovery will take a long time and things will not be the same as before. A partial, wider retreat from globalisation will favour regionalism and localism in travel as people will have less discretionary spend and confidence to venture abroad again”.*

Malleret also predicts that there will be a new obsession with cleanliness:

*“Anxiety and diffidence about sharing space with complete strangers may be another and many people may decide that it’s preferable to practice yoga or exercise at home rather than going to a club or gym. It goes without saying, whenever possible, have an online presence”.*

# Neuroplasticity

At the same time, the Global Wellness Institute's *White Paper on Mental Wellness* offers strong evidence that wellness habits promote our brain to change and rewire itself.

That the brain can grow and develop integrated neural connections in response to consistent lifestyle changes (i.e. neuroplasticity) offers hope that recovery from the social and clinical trauma of COVID-19 is possible.

This new foundation for building evidence-based pathways to mental wellness offers fresh horizons for spa and wellness.

# Spa Design Post-COVID

# Spa Design Post-COVID

Cary Collier, co-founder of Blu Spas, says:

*"Without doubt COVID-19 will impact on spa design.*

*The technology, materials and finishes to deliver more clean, virus-resilient ecosystems for spas and wellness facilities already exist."*

Priorities are:

**Air quality**, such as filtration systems, wearable air purifiers or air-purifying curtains; or

**Cleanliness**, such as elegant sanitisation portals, back-of-house 'clean zones', a reduction of 'touch zones' (e.g. sensor opening doors, self-opening lockers), self-sanitising rooms, bacteria-battling robots.

([www.bluspasinc.com](http://www.bluspasinc.com))



# Spa Re-Openings

New protocols will be established to keep both employees and guests safe:

## COVID SOPs

limiting capacity, exposure screenings  
temperature checks, face coverings, physical distancing

## OUTDOOR FOCUS

dining, treatments, fitness,  
yoga, water therapy, etc.

## MENTAL WELLNESS

At-Home programs online, and  
In-House programs at the Spa/Resort

# Online Wellness Opportunities

Thierry Malleret, economist and futurist, says of the wellness industry:

*"It goes without saying, whenever possible, have an online presence".*

## New business methods

Clearly, this is the time of online development for the wellness and spa industry.

Spas now need to expand into wellness and an online presence can include:

Online knowledge – the science of wellness,  
how-to information, wellness foods and recipes,

Online training – including mental wellness training

Online movement – both aerobic and anaerobic

Online products – personal care products, wellness apps,  
including meditation and other mental wellness apps

Online community – connecting with others online to  
share our goals for promoting mental wellbeing through shared pathways.

# At-Home Programs

Offering online mental wellness programs to previous guests is a way of retaining brand loyalty.

Offering online mental wellness programs to prospective guests is a way of building brand interest.

*At Home With Six Senses* is a portal offering advice on how to reduce anxiety and loneliness for example, as well as tips on everything from working at home to getting into good sleep routines.

The *At Home* initiative by Six Senses aims to offer proactive and pragmatic ways for people to care for themselves and the people they love.

# Wellness Coaching

Wellness coaches and spa professionals are saying that we are all feeling vulnerable since this pandemic started. We're all experiencing anxiety, stress, uncertainty – and, for a change, we are talking about it rather openly.

At an online Global Wellness Institute conference in August 2020, a number of wellness coaches said that openness about our vulnerability will enable many behavior changes toward living our healthiest, happiest lives.



# Wellness Coaching

They all agreed that if a person has a trusted advocate or coach or advisor, this will be a very powerful boost towards making positive changes in our lives.

The Wellness Coaching Initiative of the Global Wellness Institute notes that:

*"Diet, exercise, a sense of community and purpose are proven to influence health and wellbeing.*

*While many people would like to make healthy choices, it is not easy to make a choice and have the inspiration to take the first steps. Wellness coaching provides the education, mindset and motivation to help drive positive behavior change and integrate holistic, personalized strategies for optimizing health and wellbeing".*

<https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/initiatives/wellness-coaching-initiative/>

Wellness coaching for individuals and groups offers new opportunities for spas and wellness centres.



A traditional Japanese garden scene featuring a wooden pavilion with a tiled roof, surrounded by lush greenery and autumn-colored trees. A pond in the foreground reflects the pavilion and the surrounding landscape. The text "A Sense of Purpose: The Japanese Concept of Ikigai" is overlaid in white serif font.

# A Sense of Purpose: The Japanese Concept of Ikigai



# A Sense of Purpose: The Japanese Concept of Ikigai

There is no direct English translation,  
but Ikigai is a Japanese term that embodies the idea of happiness in living.

Japan has more than 67,000 citizens aged 100 years or more.

Japan's choice: a healthy older population or a sick dependent older population.

Ikigai is now being mainstreamed across every area of Government.

Purpose in Life – the long vision of wellness.

# Changing Our Routines: Building Resilience, Enhancing Immunity, Saving Lives

Many have pointed out that the COVID-19 crisis is also a call to everybody to change their lives in the direction of healthier living and more elemental human values.

**Regular daily practice** of what we have covered here ensures that these become part of our life rather than a rescue strategy, and this in turn becomes a new way of living in the post-COVID era – a true benefit from crisis.

*"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."*

Lao Tzu (c.604 BCE)



# After the Crisis

## The new normal will be:

Staff and guest safety through innovative spa technologies with strong safety protocols.

## The new horizons are:

Direct and online science-based wellness education for self-care through:  
transcendence through meditation, food-is-mood training, integrative movement - yoga,  
Tai Chi and dance, self-massage, mental wellbeing communities - including laughter yoga  
re-connection with Nature

## The science is there.

The brain will re-wire, the gut will respond, the heart will ease.

Evidence-based education for lifestyle transformation  
will be the way forward for post-COVID renewal.

# Thank you



GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE



MENTAL WELLNESS INITIATIVE  
GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE

SpaChina

Wellness Summit  
中国养生与康养峰会2020