



**GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™**  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE

## **Awareness Action Kit - GENDER -**

Global Perspectives on Inclusive Well-Being:  
The Role of Health and Wellness Coaching in  
Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and  
Belonging

Empowering Individuals, Leaders, Service  
Providers, and Advocates of DEIB Through the  
Lens of Health and Wellness Coaching

- 2024 -



**WELLNESS COACHING INITIATIVE**  
GLOBAL WELLNESS INSTITUTE

Welcome!

We are thrilled to introduce you to our **Awareness Action Kit**, designed to kickstart your journey into understanding the invaluable intersection of Health and Wellness with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

This kit offers you a practical, actionable, and easily digestible resource to delve into the profound impact that Health and Wellness can have in fostering a culture of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, And Belonging.

Directly excerpted from our comprehensive 130-page whitepaper, "Global Perspectives on Inclusive Well-Being: The Role of Health and Wellness Coaching in Fostering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging," these resources are a simple gateway to a deeper understanding.

We invite you to download the complete whitepaper along with its accompanying PowerPoint presentation and 11-page infographic, available [HERE](#).

Within the whitepaper, you'll explore 10 distinct areas of diversity, each accompanied by its own Awareness Action Kit:

- 1. Race and Ethnicity**
- 2. Age and Generations**
- 3. Gender**
- 4. Sexual Orientation**
- 5. Religion and Spirituality**
- 6. Disability**
- 7. Socioeconomic Status and Social Determinants of Health**
- 8. Health Status**
- 9. Neurodiversity**
- 10. Weight Bias and Stigma**

Each kit provides insights into the definition of the specific type of diversity, why it's crucial, how Health and Wellness Coaching can play a pivotal role in supporting it, and real-life "Voices from the field" to enrich your understanding.

Additionally, each Awareness Action Kit comes complete with a "**Questions for Discussion Guide**" to prompt thoughtful reflection and dialogue, as well as essential "**Contact Information**" to reach out for further support or inquiries. There is an (**11<sup>th</sup>**) separate **Glossary of Terms Awareness Action Kit** to enhance your comprehension across all areas covered.

Happy discovering - we're excited you've joined us!  
The Global Wellness Institute Wellness Coaching Initiative Team.

## XII. Gender



## X. Gender

- **What it is**

Gender and Gender Identity are umbrella terms that refer to people of all genders – including men, women, transgender, and non-binary individuals.

According to the WHO, gender refers to “the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time” (WHO, 2023).

Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth.

Gender Identity Diversity and Inclusion recognize the wide range of gender-related identities and ways of expression and acknowledge that everyone deserves to be treated with respect regardless of gender identity and expression (Hixson-Vulpe, 2021).

- **Why it Matters**

According to the WHO, gender is hierarchical and produces inequalities that intersect with other social and economic inequalities. Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity, and sexual orientation, among others.

Gender influences people’s experience of and access to healthcare. The way that health services are organized and provided can either limit or enable a person’s access to healthcare information, support, and services, and the outcome of those encounters. Health services should be affordable, accessible, and acceptable to all, and they should be provided with quality, equity, and dignity.

Gender inequality and discrimination impose substantial threats to the health and well-being of women and girls, introducing barriers to accessing essential health information and services (WHO, 2023). Gender

inequalities extend to medical research too, creating “an ever-widening gap in our knowledge of how disease processes occur and can be treated in women” (Simmons, 2023). These challenges encompass restricted physical mobility, limited decision-making power, lower literacy rates, and discriminatory attitudes from both communities and healthcare providers. Additionally, healthcare systems often lack adequate training and awareness regarding the specific health needs and challenges faced by women and girls. Consequently, this heightened vulnerability places them at increased risk for various health issues, including:

- unintended pregnancies,
- sexually transmitted infections,
- cervical cancer,
- malnutrition,
- respiratory infections,
- elder abuse,
- elevated levels of violence, —such as female genital mutilation and child, early, and forced marriage.

The detrimental impact of harmful gender norms extends beyond women and girls to affect the health and well-being of boys and men. Particularly concerning are rigid notions of masculinity that encourage risky behaviors, such as smoking, engaging in unsafe sexual practices, misusing alcohol, and refraining from seeking necessary healthcare. These damaging norms contribute to both the perpetration and victimization of violence among boys and men, with profound implications for their mental health.

Furthermore, rigid gender norms adversely impact individuals with diverse gender identities, subjecting them to violence, stigma, and discrimination, particularly within healthcare settings. Consequently, this group faces a heightened risk of HIV and mental health challenges, including suicide.

When looking at healthcare through the lens of Gender and Gender Identity DEIB, we must observe two aspects of this system: a system that provides health services and health-related care and a workplace environment.

### **A system that provides health services and health-related care.**

Being a gender and gender identity-diverse health service and healthcare system means making sure women and men have equal conditions and opportunities to fulfill their health potential, a fair distribution of resources, an ability to identify and meet different gender-based needs, and measures to eliminate gender inequities.

It also means addressing the gender bias of the healthcare practitioners working in the system. This is often found to be unintentional, but a result of the vestiges of disproved beliefs and outdated conventions because much of medical science is based on the belief that male and female

physiology differ only in terms of sex and reproductive organs. This results in conducting most medical research on males.

Gender-based inequality in healthcare has proven to be damaging and dangerous. Some examples follow:

- One in five women feel their doctor has ignored or dismissed their symptoms, and 17% say they feel they have been treated differently because of their gender (Paulsen, 2020).
- A survey conducted in early 2019 by *TODAY* found one in five women say they have felt that a healthcare provider has ignored or dismissed their symptoms, and 17% say they feel they have been treated differently because of their gender—compared with 14% and 6% of men, respectively (Today Show, 2019).
- Women receive a later diagnosis of over 700 different diseases than men, making preventable diseases much more lethal (Surest, 2021).
- Conditions that most commonly impact women, like fibromyalgia and chronic pain, are less studied and less well-known. This means there are fewer treatment options and fewer ways to reduce suffering (Ruschak et al., 2023).
- A UK study examining over 18,600 people with 15 different types of cancer found that women consistently waited longer for a diagnosis after first noticing their symptoms (Din et al., 2015).
- A study conducted by Jane E. Hoffmann and Anita J. Tarzian, addresses the bias against women in the treatment of pain. They claim that “In general, women report more severe levels of pain, more frequent incidences of pain, and pain of longer duration than men, but are nonetheless treated for pain less aggressively,” The repercussions of this can be dire, Hoffmann and Tarzian add, as women are statistically more likely to receive inaccurate or inadequate treatment if their pain is not taken seriously (Hoffmann & Tarzian, 2003).
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reports an estimated 257 million women around the world who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe, modern methods of contraception. A range of factors also contribute to unintended pregnancies, including a lack of sexual and reproductive healthcare; contraceptives that do not suit women's circumstances; harmful norms surrounding women controlling their bodies; sexual violence and reproductive coercion; and shaming in health services (United Nations, 2022).
- Transgender and GNC adults were more likely to be uninsured and have unmet healthcare needs, and were less likely to have routine care, compared to cisgender (non-transgender) women (Gonzales & Henning-Smith, 2017).
- A study of patients from 2021 in the U.S, revealed that transgender people encounter unique challenges and inequalities in their ability to access health insurance and adequate care (Santos, 2021).

## **Healthcare as a workplace environment.**

Being a gender and gender identity-diverse workplace means rising above counting the number of women employed vs. the number of men and focusing on promoting equality by addressing the gender pay gap as well as looking into ways to alleviate barriers and restrictions faced by employees of both genders when contributing to the workforce and exploring opportunities to advance.

In the U.S., women represent 66% of all entry-level healthcare employees. However, only 30% make it to the top of the ladder. Over 1.4 million people, in the U.S., identify themselves as transgender. Human resources must use inclusive language in the policies, to avoid hurting people from other genders like gender-neutral, transgender, etc. (Berlin et al., 2020; Pathak, 2023).

- **How Health and Wellness Coaching can support this diversity**

Gender discrimination has a significant impact on mental and physical health worldwide. It can limit access to healthcare, increase rates of ill health, and lower life expectancy (Medilexicon International, 2021).

Coaching, as a profession, can play an important role in promoting gender equality among employees in the healthcare system by helping to identify and remove gender-based barriers that hold people from advancing, including bias, stereotypes, and lack of access to leadership roles (Boldly, 2023).

When facing Identity-based health inequalities and disparities, coaches can support clients in the following specific ways:

- Raising awareness to help clients recognize when they are facing gender and gender-related health disparities.
- Helping clients increase emotional agility and develop behavioral strategies to cope with events of gender and gender-related health disparities and discrimination.
- Helping clients create tailored responses and interventions to address specific reoccurring gender and gender-related health disparities and discrimination.
- Empowering clients by addressing the mental effects of gender-related discrimination, such as stress, anxiety, depressive states, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence (Medilexicon International, 2021).
- Promoting health literacy and data collection to help clients educate themselves about their health and social rights so they can make informed decisions about their health and advocate for themselves.

- Educating themselves and keeping up to date with the latest research and best practices in addressing gender and gender identity health disparities to provide the most effective support to their clients.

- **Voices From the Field**

## **Women with Breast Cancer**

For most women diagnosed with metastasized (secondary) breast cancer, this is either the second or third time they find themselves fighting for their lives. This makes the experience overwhelming on a physical, emotional, and mental level.

For this reason, a leading pharmaceutical company decided to create an online support service for these women, that included calls with a nurse, nutritionist, and medical coach. The purpose of the medical coaching sessions was to increase their emotional and mental resilience (Ben-Arzi, 2023).

In this case study, a woman with metastasized breast tumor was experiencing stress and anxiety. She reported that some of her stressors and challenges were connected to gender-related bias from her healthcare practitioners. This bias manifested in judgmental comments regarding her need for information, anxiety, and wish to explore Integrative Medicine practices to help alleviate side effects from the treatment.

As a result, she experienced elevated levels of stress before every encounter with her doctor and avoided contacting him when she had questions, exhibited new symptoms, or needed medical directions.

Through Medical Coaching, the woman:

- Learned to develop communicational strategies to effectively communicate her needs, wishes, and boundaries with her medical team.
- Learned to increase her emotional agility.
- Felt empowered to use new behavioral strategies with her medical team.
- Experienced a significant decrease in her levels of anxiety.
- Was able to ask for the information she needed to make educated health choices.
- Felt supported, informed, and validated throughout her treatment.
- Experienced an increase in her energy and overall sense of hope.



## **Pregnant Women**

The mental and physical changes experienced during pregnancy can be overwhelming, and it's often difficult to navigate the healthcare system. Many women receive inadequate prenatal care for a variety of reasons, ranging from age and accessibility to financial concerns. "Early Steps Maternity of Quantum Health" provides specific health and wellness coaching support to pregnant women (Quantum Health, 2023).

In this case study, the pregnant woman had many questions and concerns during her pregnancy, from mental (previous depression) and physical health to financial uncertainty. Through Health Coaching, the pregnant woman:

- Learned new sleeping positions to improve quality of rest while pregnant.
- Felt supported and informed throughout pregnancy and postpartum.
- Depression showed no signs of returning, and the client learned how to get help if needed.
- Lowered her employer-sponsored insurance rates.
- Gave birth to a healthy baby boy with no issues during delivery or infancy.

*"My coaches were very resourceful and made me feel that my health and wellbeing was their top priority. They had kind, soothing voices that made me feel at ease, and they provided me with information and tips to make my pregnancy as comfortable as possible." — Early Steps Maternity Participant*

## Contact Information

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### Want to contribute?

Health and Wellness Coaching Connection Blog Space.

It is our mission to empower individuals and businesses around the world to confidently partner with wellness coaches, optimizing health and well-being and clarifying wellness coach specialties and global guidelines through education and community resources. The GWI WCI Blog is one of these resources intended to advance the global Health & Wellness Coaching Community by providing accessible, evidence-based articles related to the field of Health & Wellness Coaching. Blogs will be posted on our area of the [GWI website](#) and cross-posted on LinkedIn.

Learn more here :

[Wellness Coaching Connection Contributor Guidelines](#)  
[Blog-Newsletter Submission Form](#)

Please email us ([gwiwci2023@gmail.com](mailto:gwiwci2023@gmail.com)) if anything is unclear or if you have questions. We look forward to receiving your submissions!

## Questions for Discussion Guide

Complementing our research, this Questions for Discussion Guide serves as an organized tool to facilitate ongoing discussion and contemplation on the pivotal role of Health and Wellness Coaching within the realms of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Intended for educators, students, and readers, this guide provides a structured framework for further exploration, encouraging thoughtful analysis and collaborative dialogue to advance inclusive practices in the field.

- What does a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace/ world/ community where everyone belongs look like/feel like?
- What are the gaps in your organization around this type of diversity?
- How might you champion greater inclusion in your day to day?
- How can you champion more inclusion and awareness around this diversity?
- What might be a personal obstacle to embracing this type of diversity?
- What unconscious bias might you have in this type of diversity?
  - How might you explore your unconscious bias?
- What is the greatest challenge for you concerning this type of diversity and why?
- Who might support you to better understand this type of diversity?
- In what context might you find this type of diversity most relevant (i.e. Workplace? Schools? Community?)
- Where (country, location, venue) might this type of diversity NOT be a challenge and why?
- What has been your personal experience with this type of diversity - from the outside or inside?