



Ask the Expert

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is the Director of Wellness for **St. Leonard** and has over 15 years of health, leisure and fitness experience in all levels of care for the senior adult population.

Q *Why is it beneficial to take into consideration the entire spectrum of wellness when designing your optimal lifestyle and health care strategy?*

A The dimensions of wellness involve eight life ecologies, including: socialization, nutrition, physical, environmental, emotional, intellectual, vocational, and spiritual. These life sciences nurture and strengthen the auto-immune system of the human being. The very success of one wellness event or habit in your life means that you have experienced a well-rounded personal involvement with the eight ecologies or dimensions of wellness. Creating your wellness plan using careful assessment will help you continue to realize successful wellness moments that will give you the courage and confidence to continue toward your personal wellness goals.

Q *Is it true that a good exercise program can fight the aging process?*

A We know that exercise strengthens the body, improves oxygen capacity, improves circulation, and reduces LDL cholesterol. Another advantage that ties into the other dimensions of wellness is the fact that exercise improves the brain's neuroplasticity to adapt and function. This is where the brain and the body communicate more efficiently the needed will power and desire to make healthy choices and avoid unhealthy habits, which is a well-known factor in longevity.

Q *Are stress and depression the major causes for premature aging?*

A Scientists are changing their thinking concerning the effects of stress and depression on the body. In fact, an emerging field of study called psychoneuroimmunology focuses on the study of the interactions of stress and depressive factors regarding the immune system and nervous systems. Stress and depression can cause increases in the susceptibility to infection, heart disease, asthma, gastric disturbances, and many more life altering illnesses. The good news is that, with a careful assessment of your wellness strategy, you will find that there are many options for reducing the triggers in life that seem to fuel stress and depression.

Q *What is memory care?*

A Memory care is a process of finding out how we remember and why we forget. Every person is unique when they begin to experience memory loss, and understanding the information-processing system of encoding, storage, and retrieval is essential in developing a personalized memory care program. A memory care program should help to preserve the identity of the individual, while promoting the cognitive functions of thinking, deciding, and creating using the eight dimensions of wellness as a platform for optimal well-being.

Q *Does an enriched social environment reduce frailty?*

A A tremendous amount of research is occurring in this area, and scientists have found over and over again that people who are intellectually challenged, and who live in an enriched social environment thrive over those who live alone in isolation. More neurons are preserved, and connections are increased in enriched social environments; hence, improving memory, reasoning, and the speed of processing new information. Social interaction reduces stress, improves social support, and acts as an emotional buffer for life challenges, so that life can remain fun and functional throughout the life course.



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