

Online Counselor Education

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS



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Managing Family, Work, and School

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Chapter Overview

This chapter serves as a way to help you conceptualize the delicate balance of family, work, and school. After a brief overview of the life of an online student, two wellness models grounded in counseling theory are described, along with the basic steps for developing wellness plans, and evaluating outcomes. Application of these concepts will be discussed throughout the chapter. Finally, student experiences are offered as a means to showcase potential ways of balancing family, work, and school.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand models of wellness and how they relate to life as a student
- Awareness of one's own wellness strengths and areas for growth
- Develop strategies to positively impact wellness growth areas
- Generalize learning to working with clients on their wellness

Guide to Success

1. While reading about the wellness models, reflect upon your personal wellness.
2. Analyze areas of strengths and potential areas of growth in your personal wellness.
3. When considering your wellness plan, make a list of people you can rely on to hold you accountable and/or assist with your wellness goals.

Introduction

Balancing family, work, and school can be a challenge for graduate students enrolled in online education programs. Those training to become professional counselors have additional workloads due to the intensity and rigor in counselor preparation. Professional counselors are charged to provide client-centered services that foster wellness for all persons (Chi Sigma Iota, n.d.). In fact, engaging in self-care is discussed as a professional responsibility of all counselors in the American Counseling Association's *Code of Ethics* (2014). In order to support client wellness and engage in personal self-care, one must first identify one's own wellness strength and growth areas.

The Life of an Online Student

Online counselor education programs can be great choices for students who desire to pursue advanced degrees due to the flexibility these programs provide for completing professional studies while still allowing for life to happen. The structure of online learning environments will vary depending on the program offered; however, there is a common factor in that all online students have assignment deadlines, and the work can be fit into an existing schedule and completed anywhere with Internet access. In contrast, graduate students in traditional campus courses must report to campus each week for at least 3 hours per course, not including the time required commuting to campus.

While the flexibility of online education is an advantage, the structure of online learning can also present challenges. In traditional on-campus programs, students have a clear boundary of when they are required

to be in class so it may be easier to set boundaries with friends, family, and work responsibilities. A significant amount of learning occurs in the classroom with students responsible for readings and assignments outside of class. In contrast, online counseling graduate students may feel challenged in the areas of setting boundaries and finding time to complete coursework. Students may find it harder to communicate to partners or children that time usually spent doing other tasks must now be set aside for school work. In an exclusively online course, learning can occur through readings, interactions with peers on discussion boards, pretaped lectures, weekly Web meetings, and assignments. The 3 hours traditional students spend on-campus per course each week are included in the assigned tasks in an online course. While online students generally have flexibility around where and when they complete course work, they can still expect to devote the same amount of time in class and outside of class as a traditional on-campus student.

It is common for online students to continue following schedules similar to life before graduate studies while adding on the demands

Table 3.1 Daily Schedule of Online Student

6 a.m.	Wake up, shower, get dressed, make breakfast, get kids ready for school
8 a.m.	Arrive at work
5 p.m.	Leave work; pick up kids from day care/afterschool or head to next obligation
5 - 7 p.m.	Take kids to extra curricular activities; commute home; gym; errands; church
7 p.m.	Dinner
7:30 - 9 p.m.	Help kids with homework; chores; spend time with partner; connect with friends
10 p.m.	Put kids to bed (Don't forget their baths!)
10:30 p.m.	Reading for graduate courses, homework, and research for graduate assignments
Midnight	Go to bed (Wash, rinse, repeat.)

of their graduate counseling program of study. Adding reading time, research time, and writing time to an already busy schedule may seem like a daunting task. How does anyone add time to an already exhausting schedule? To understand this, an examination of a typical schedule of an online graduate student has been provided in Table 3.1.

Your schedule may closely resemble this or it may be different depending on your life circumstances. Classroom teachers may well have a stack of student papers to grade at home in addition to completing their own homework for graduate school. You may even have to be at your job earlier than 8 am! If you live in a rural area, travel times may be extended due to the distance between work, school, and home. Learning how to evaluate your personal wellness may position you to better balance family, work, and school while positioning you for success in an online counselor education program. The following is a brief introduction to two models of wellness grounded in counseling theory. As wellness is integrated into the identity and ethical responsibilities of professional counselors (American Counseling Association, 2014), understanding the following theoretical background may likely be of both personal and professional interest to you.

Introduction to Wellness

Wellness, in contrast to the medical, “illness-oriented” model that conceptualizes problems as deficiencies from normal or average functioning, emphasizes optimal growth and development. Remediation of problem issues may be reconceptualized as resolving normal, developmental challenges through positive lifestyle choices, or, as stated by Remley (1991) and emphasized by Myers (1992), “We do not believe that people must first be diagnosed with an illness before they can be treated with counseling services . . . all people can benefit from counseling, fully functioning people who experience everyday stress in their lives . . .” (Myers, 1992, p. 138). Diagnosis and the treatment of pathology, essential to the medical model, becomes less central as professional counselors focus on making choices that promote optimal functioning. This is a powerful concept, as positively impacting your wellness now can have a lasting impact on your remaining lifespan, as well as positively impact those in your life such as your family. Professional counselors have embraced an identity around wellness-centered developmental approaches. But, to understand how to apply such an identity in practice through your own

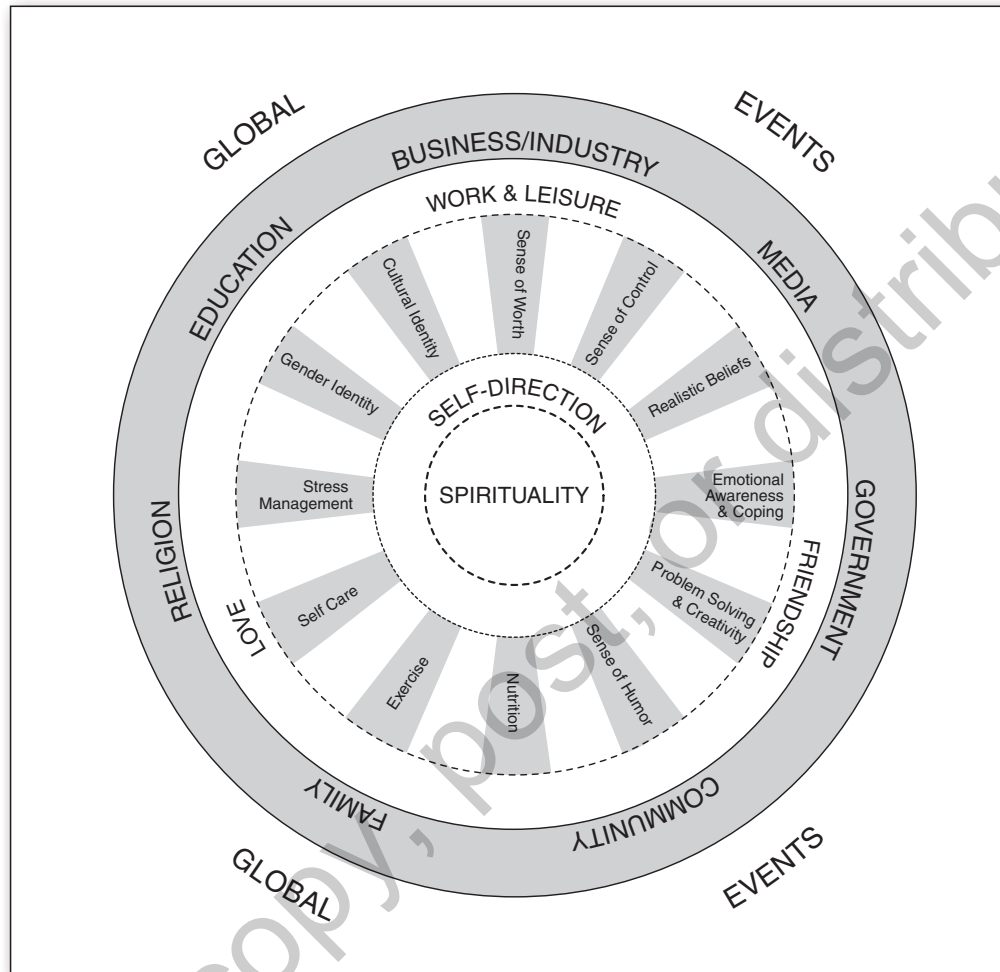
life and truly understand your own wellness and generalize that learning to your work with clients, it is important to more clearly define wellness.

Wellness Definition and Models

Wellness “requires conscious choices to engage in healthful behaviors” and results in “helping you live your life more fully in all areas” (Myers & Sweeney, 2006, p. 3). Wellness “involves the integration of mind, body, and spirit” (Myers & Sweeney, 2006, p. 3). Two wellness models, the (a) Wheel of Wellness (WoW; Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000) and (b) the Indivisible Self Model (IS-Wel; Myers & Sweeney, 2005a), offer a framework for structuring interventions to enhance your own well-being, as well as the wellness of your future clients who may struggle from a variety of problem issues (Myers & Sweeney, 2005a; 2008).

The Wheel of Wellness. Using Adler’s Individual Psychology as a foundation and incorporating the findings from empirical studies on health, longevity, and quality of life across disciplines, Myers and colleagues (2000) developed a theoretical model that integrates 17 specific areas into a holistic conceptualization of wellness. Five life tasks were found central to healthy human functioning: (a) Work, (b) Friendship, (c) Love, (d) Self, and (e) Spirituality, with the latter hypothesized to be the central aspect of wellness, incorporating both individualized components of meaning and purpose making as well as religious/spiritual beliefs (Myers & Sweeney, 2005b). As spirituality is core to many racial/ethnic groups across the world, Myers and Sweeney (2005b; 2008) argued that the Wheel of Wellness model is generalizable to many populations. Further, through its simple visual depiction (Figure 3.1), this model is useful for teaching about the holistic nature of wellness and working on specific aspects of wellness.

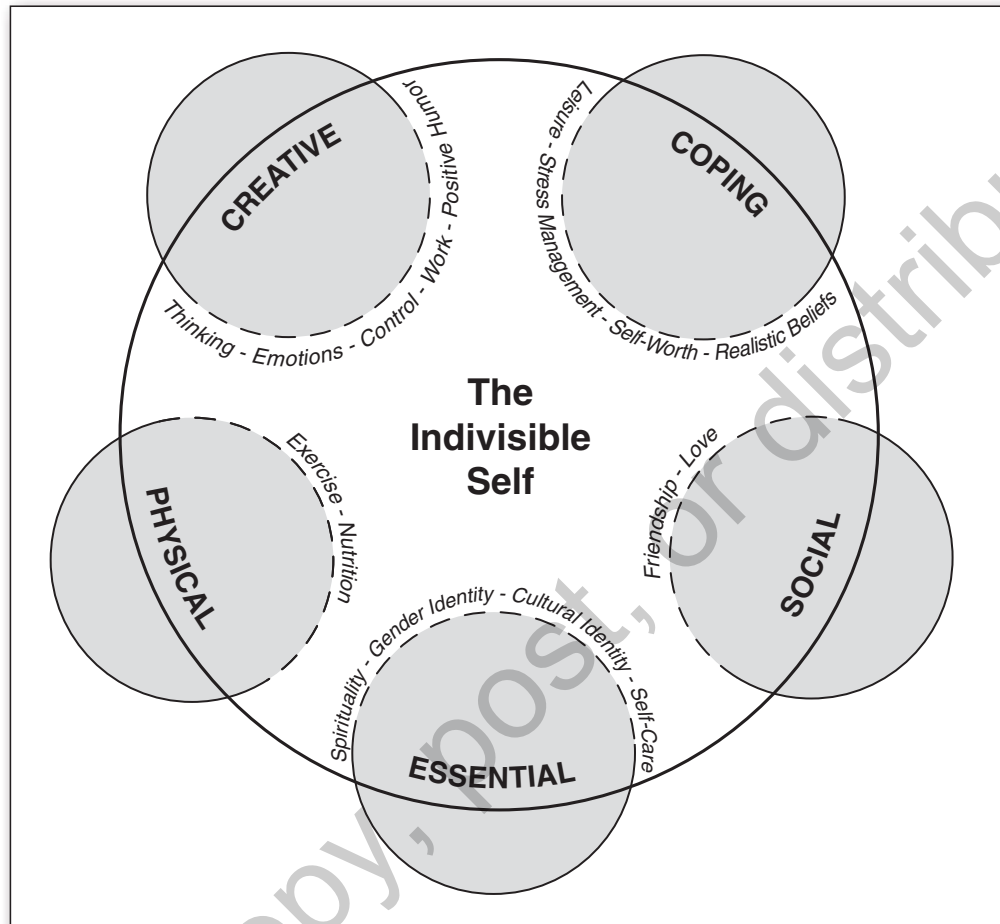
The Indivisible Self-Model of Wellness. The IS-Wel (Myers & Sweeney, 2005b) emerged from research on the wheel model and illustrated Alfred Adler’s concept of holism, as the self cannot be divided. Supported through structural equation modeling, the IS-Wel components are highly interrelated and grouped into five second-order factors, or “selves.” Changes in any one area of wellness results in changes to other areas, which may be for better (through positive lifestyle choices) or for worse (through maladaptive behavior). As an example, consider how working long hours consequently may challenge your ability to devote time to relationships with family and friends, and it may even be that those relationships were important to your

Figure 3.1 The Wheel of Wellness

SOURCE: Myers, J. E., Sweeney, T. J., & Witmer, J. M. (2000). The wheel of wellness counseling for wellness: A holistic model for treatment planning. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78, 251–266; reprinted with permission.

exercise habits. This integration is depicted in the model (Figure 3.2) through dashed lines between the Indivisible Self and the second-order selves.

Seventeen third-order factors, or wellness components, are nested within the second-order selves, and include those areas originally presented in the WoW. These include: (a) The Creative Self (i.e., Thinking, Emotions, Control, Work, Positive Humor), defined as one's intrapersonal and interpersonal characteristics that distinguishes oneself from others, (b) The Coping Self (i.e., Leisure, Stress Management, Self-Worth,

Figure 3.2 The Indivisible Self

SOURCE: Myers, J. E., & Sweeney, T. J. (2004). The indivisible self: An evidence-based model of wellness. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 60*, 234-244; reprinted with permission.

and Realistic Beliefs) that includes the skills and resources that buffers one from life stressors and enhances quality of life, (c) The Social Self (i.e., Friendship and Love) that reflects experiences with and satisfaction from quality mutual relationships with others, (d) The Essential Self (i.e., Spirituality, Gender Identity, Cultural Identity, Self-Care) that involves meaning-making processes that result from experiences one has in relation to self, others, and life, and (e) The Physical Self (i.e., Exercise and Nutrition) that includes health promoting behaviors in the service of overall bodily well-being (Myers & Sweeney, 2004; 2008).

Myers and Sweeney (2008), through their summary of wellness research, found wellness was a critical factor in relation to career/job satisfaction, relational success, self-esteem/self-worth/mattering, and cultural identity development. Additionally, outcome studies showed the effectiveness of wellness approaches in improving stress management and college success (for an exhaustive list of these studies see Myers & Sweeney, 2008). This is, however the first time wellness has been used to conceptualize the needs of online students in managing family, work, and school.

Promoting Wellness of the Online Student

As with most counseling approaches, wellness approaches can be applied to work with individuals, groups, families, or communities. In this case, we are considering wellness approaches among counselor-trainees in an online counselor preparatory program. Within any of these interventions, a common four-step paradigm is usually applied. As described by Myers and Sweeney (2005b), wellness counseling involves (a) introduction of the wellness model, (b) assessment, (c) development and implementation of a personal wellness plan, and (d) evaluation and follow-up. Within all four steps, counselor-trainees are empowered to make lifestyle choices, whereby each choice leads toward greater wellness, more positive lifestyle choices, and positively impacting the rest of one's lifespan. The application of these four steps in practice is further elaborated below.

Introduction of the model. We become more committed to wellness when the concept is personalized; thus, wellness counseling often begins with exploring your own personal meaning of wellness and your self-assessed wellness strengths and growth areas. The visual depiction of a wellness model can facilitate this process, allowing you to see the components of your wellness, while discussing what those components look like and how they are interrelated in your own life. You are encouraged to provide examples to support the definitions and any modifications needed to personalize the factors to your own family, work, and school context.

Along with self-definition, self-direction is also central to wellness counseling; personal decision-making and choices are key concepts. You are encouraged to explore how your own lifestyle choices and decisions, in small and more significant ways, contribute to (or detract from) your overall wellness. Presenting wellness in each area as a continuum from low to high may also be helpful. While negative lifestyle choices may move you toward lower wellness, positive lifestyle choices create

movement toward higher wellness. Again, positively impacting your wellness now can have a lasting impact on your remaining lifespan.

Assessment. While discussing wellness components, self-assessment is needed to personalize the meaning of each factor. This can be accomplished formally, with a measure such as the 5F-Wel, or informally, through the exercise below. Given the large number of factors, we encourage you to select one or two areas that are most present and important to you. By focusing on too many factors, the potential for positive change declines significantly.

Assessing your schedule. You are encouraged to first take a moment to consider your current schedule. Create a chart of your daily schedule similar to the one provided at the beginning of the chapter. Now, further divide your schedule by adding in moments when you are attending to your family, responsibilities, self-care, and any other important aspects of your life. You may even want to label each moment with the corresponding self from the IS-Wel model. Identify areas of strength in your current wellness routine. Take a moment to review your wellness surrounding family, responsibilities, stress, and relationships. Are you stronger in one area than in another? Are there areas where your selves overlap?

Consider the example from our introduction.

Assessing your stress. Stress can manifest itself in varied ways among individuals. Indicators of stress in your schedule may not be as readily apparent as working long hours, but can be incremental and have a cumulative effect on your wellness. Assessing symptoms of stress can be done using a symptoms checklist or through an informal examination of your thoughts, feelings, and emotions throughout the day. As you were assessing your own schedule, did you notice a particular period of the day when you usually feel rushed, anxious, irritated, or overwhelmed? Do you notice somatic symptoms like stomach discomfort, racing heart, or tightening of your shoulder muscles when you consider these areas? Are there times during your day when you notice an increased sense of worry or that you cannot seem to concentrate? All of these symptoms could be a sign of stress. Take a moment to see if you can identify your actions, emotions, or surroundings prior to these stress indicators. Recognizing when these indicators of stress arise and what events precede stress reactions can help you be intentional about implementing positive lifestyle changes.

Table 3.2 Daily Schedule of Online Student Identifying Wellness Life Tasks

6 a.m.	Essential Self, Social Self, Physical Self	Wake up, read devotional, shower, get dressed, make breakfast, get kids ready for school
8 a.m.	Creative Self	Arrive at work
5 p.m.	Social Self	Leave work; pick up kids from day care/afterschool or head to other obligation
5 - 7 p.m.	Social Self, Essential Self, Physical Self	Take kids to extra curricular activities; commute home; gym; errands; church
7 p.m.	Physical Self	Dinner
7:30 - 9 p.m.	Creative Self, Social Self	Help kids with homework; chores; spend time with partner; connect with friends
10 p.m.	Essential or Coping Self	Put kids to bed (Don't forget their baths!)
10:30 p.m.	Creative Self	Reading for graduate courses, homework, and research for graduate assignments
Midnight	Essential Self	Go to bed (Wash, rinse, repeat.)

While stress and schedule typically emerge for online students, we encourage you to go through each of the five selves in Figure 3.2: (a) Creative Self, (b) Coping Self, (c) Social Self, (d) Essential Self, and (e) Physical Self. Typically, individuals immediately understand which wellness components are strengths, and which are weakness areas. There are many possible choices for enhancing wellness, and after a thoughtful selection of which area(s) you would like to focus on, you are encouraged to develop concrete goals to positively impact the area of wellness you have identified. When assessing your wellness, you are also taking stock of your own resources and supports, as well as needs to position you for success.

Developing and implementing a wellness plan. During wellness counseling, it is important to link any presenting issues or problems with wellness components, so that barriers to achieving goals can be identified and discussed. You may find maintaining a wellness plan easier if you choose to focus on increasing wellness in only one area at a time. Note that increasing positive contributions to your wellness in one area will positively impact other areas. We will guide you through this process while examining a few common growth areas for online students.

Wellness and family. Throughout the online graduate school journey, graduate students juggle many responsibilities and tasks. It is not uncommon for students to feel overwhelmed by family responsibilities as they juggle work, family, and school. On the opposite end of this spectrum, it is also not uncommon for students enrolled in online graduate programs to simultaneously feel disconnected to their family as family activity time is replaced with study time and responsibilities are traded off to accommodate the graduate student's schedule.

Whether beginning a journey to be a professional counselor through an online program or wrapping up the journey to be a professional counselor, family plays a valuable role in personal wellness. Through interactions and relationships with family, our Social Self can be positively and negatively enhanced. The Coping Self can be tied to family through our personal self-worth and leisure activities involving family. For graduate students who are married and/or have children, nutrition and exercise (Physical Self) may be closely tied to family rituals in the same way spirituality, cultural identity, and self-care (Essential Self) are part of our nuclear and extended family rituals. Family interactions often involve activation of our Creative Self through emotions, thoughts, control, work and positive humor. One's personal wellness is interconnected with family interactions and family wellness.

Developing ways to involve family in your personal wellness plan as well as ways to increase the wellness of the family unit can be a great way to stay connected throughout a busy graduate school career. Consider ways in which family strengthens the goals of accomplishing life balance and seeking optimal wellness. Does the family routine involve time to reconnect, share successes and stresses, and support each other? For most individuals, family connections are a valuable resource for stress management and reconnecting with our value systems (Coping and Essential Selves).

When assessing and developing personal wellness plans to manage responsibilities, stress, and relationships, family members can be an important resource to leverage in your plan and an accountability source to keep the plan on track. For instance, if one finds themselves overwhelmed by home responsibilities (i.e., preparing meals, laundry, cleaning), family members can be brought in to share these tasks thus provide a form of stress management (Coping Self) by allowing time to focus on other areas of wellness such as work (Creative Self) or self care (Essential Self). Children can be assigned chores; spouses can develop a meal preparation schedule; and/or the family can schedule a weekly chore hour and compete to see who can finish the most in the allotted time—all of which are ways to involve family in your personal wellness plan. When the graduate student has an impending research project that requires focus, extended family members can be a valuable resource for childcare, assistance with other responsibilities, or even help proofreading for clarity. Involving family members in our wellness plans can also illuminate ways in which the family's overall wellness can be improved.

Managing responsibilities. Prior to enrolling in an online counselor education program, most individuals have a schedule determined by their life commitments to self, work, family, and community. Pursuing graduate studies online brings a new set of responsibilities. Students must find ways to fit homework, reading, research, and assignments into an already hectic schedule. How does one manage the addition of graduate schoolwork and the increase in time spent in the creative self?

Setting a realistic schedule. If your life is anything like the average person's, you return home from work tired and your evening does not work out the way you planned, even though you had the best of intentions. Setting a realistic schedule begins with being honest about your current responsibilities and barriers to successfully accomplishing your goals. To begin this exploration, create a list of recurring activities in the day or week that cannot be moved. Next, create a list of responsibilities that are flexible and can be moved to another day depending on added life and coursework responsibilities (some weeks will require more time online and with readings than others). Review your course syllabi and write down due dates for your assignments. Once these lists are created, step back and reflect on what strengths you have in your life that support accomplishing these responsibilities and what barriers might arise while trying to accomplish your tasks.

Once you have answered these questions, you can begin plotting your schedule. Start slowly by planning out one day with tasks that cannot be moved, add in flexible tasks, note any potential barriers to accomplishing this schedule, and try to plan ahead for what you could do when barriers arise. Take notes during the day regarding what was accomplished for the day and what barriers arose that you had not planned. It can be helpful to repeat this activity for a week to evaluate the stability of the week's schedule. Reflect on the week's accomplishments. Did you feel stressed at any point? Did you accomplish everything you scheduled? Are any resources available to help you accomplish your schedule?

Time management. Setting realistic expectations is only one cognitive key to managing responsibilities while time management is a skill that can help ensure responsibilities are completed efficiently and on time. While in graduate school, effective time management will help with goal accomplishment and time saved can incrementally add up to more time for increasing wellness in other areas. After setting a realistic schedule, carefully analyze the time spent on task, moments of inactivity, and any moments where accomplishing more than one goal at a time may be possible. Try to locate moments when your time is not being used efficiently. Managing time effectively involves re-envisioning life's responsibilities by being creative in how and when tasks are accomplished. How can one practice effective time management and still practice wellness?

Effective time management involves careful preparation. Keeping your school tools close by will help you utilize moments of inactivity and take advantage of multitasking moments. Whether you have your laptop or tablet with you or a textbook and a paper notebook, utilize those small moments of time to accomplish your school tasks. For instance, many parents take their children to after school activities (Social Self and Creative Self) and then wait while their child participates in this activity. As an online graduate student, this time spent waiting could also be utilized to read for class or begin composing papers (Creative Self). Some employers allow their employees an hour-long lunch break (Physical Self); this time can be spent completing class assignments (Creative Self). Additionally, incorporating the family by setting family homework time when everyone is working on homework together can be a great way to spend time with loved ones (Creative Self and Social Self), instill a value for education (Essential Self), and hold yourself accountable for getting work done. Using your resources wisely can help you better manage your time as a worker and student while keeping your stress level at a minimum.

Managing stress. The best stress management plans are enacted well before an individual becomes stressed. As an online graduate student, you can expect for life emergencies to happen while you are enrolled in your counseling program. Work related deadlines, family illness, Internet connection problems, or personal issues may arise that cause additional stress in your life. Earlier in this chapter, you may have identified additional barriers to accomplishing your work. Whether barriers are predictable or unpredictable, undoubtedly, anyone can still feel stressed when a well-planned schedule is interrupted.

To combat stressors, consider the strengths in your life and how they might be leveraged on your stress management plan to increase overall wellness. Family and friends can be strengths to help reduce stress or even resources to help share the workload when our schedule becomes tightened. Students may find that taking a mental break (Essential Self) by spending time with their family (Social Self) can help refocus efforts on assignments (Creative Self). Reviewing your time management plan can help regain a sense of control over the day or scheduling time buffers by intentionally scheduling extra study time during your week to be used when needed (Creative Self). Choosing one activity that you enjoy to be incorporated in your weekly schedule as a point of self-care (Essential Self) can also provide an effective stress management (Shallcross, 2011).

Finally setting realistic expectations about how much work can be accomplished can help manage stress reactions (Coping Self). Realistic expectations could mean giving yourself permission to earn a grade of B on an assignment to help relieve stressors. Knowing how much work you can truthfully complete and setting this as an expectation versus trying to complete a week's worth of readings and assignments in one night can also be an effective form of stress management. Keep in mind that your professors are invested in your growth as a professional counselor as well. Reach out to your professors when life stressors arise and inquire about possible extensions if allowed. These strategies can help reduce stress through the utilization of strengths and help get a well-planned wellness routine back on track.

Managing relationships. Establishing relationships is a cornerstone stage in the counseling process (Hackney & Cormier, 2013), and this skill is transferrable to our daily lives. As discussed previously, our Social Self

encompasses our experiences with this network of supportive friendship and love (Myers & Sweeney, 2004; 2008). Prior to entering graduate studies, the ability to build and maintain relationships could help provide a network of friends, family, and colleagues who are reciprocally supportive. This network can be a strength during graduate studies by providing support, active listening, and as an accountability check for an established wellness plan. Managing these relationships often requires work on the part of both parties, which can add stress to a graduate student's complicated life. We will examine ways to maintain these relationships and maintain personal wellness. Our focus will be on relationships outside of our immediate family as a review of wellness in the context of family has already been explored.

Using the IS-Wel as the foundation of our exploration, consider ways that your relationships currently contribute to your wellness. Spending time with close friends can be a stress management technique that incorporates the Social, Creative, Coping, and Essential Selves. Walking with others and conversing about the trials and triumphs of the day can incorporate wellness in the Physical, Social, Creative, and Coping Selves. Providing a listening ear to a friend in crisis may be a daily or weekly occurrence for you and be part of your identity (Essential Self and Coping Self).

When you begin graduate school, you may find that your time for these activities becomes limited due to increased time spent in the creative self due to your graduate schoolwork. To successfully manage these relationships, examining the impact of these relationships on your wellness should be established. Does the time spent energize you, or does it feel more like work? If you notice any of the stress indicators present before, during, or after interactions with an individual, this may be an indicator that this relationship is stress producing. Is there a way to change this relationship so that it is a source of strength and wellness instead?

Managing relationships as a graduate student enrolled in a counseling program can be difficult. You may find yourself using the skills from your counseling courses in interactions with friends. Establishing boundaries around these relationships can not only be a key to your personal wellness, but is also ethically important to avoid dual relationships (American Counseling Association, 2014). As professional counselors, we cannot ethically provide counseling to our friends or family; however,

we must take the lead in communication and advocacy around avoiding these dual relationships. Being transparent with important individuals in our life about the type of relationship we can have and monitoring when our helpful interactions are nonreciprocal and unbalanced can help regulate stress. Being comfortable with and knowing when to respectfully say no to event invitations or requests for favors from close friends can be an important skill used in our self-care practice. Most importantly, when you find a close relationship does not contribute to your wellness, take a moment to reflect on the IS-Wel model to consider whether or not this relationship can be reestablished in a way that promotes optimal wellness.

Evaluation and follow-up. As is true of any behaviorally oriented plan for change, optimizing wellness is a process that includes continual evaluation of progress, examination of choices, discussion of barriers, and assessment of commitment. The goal is to help yourself (and your future clients) learn to focus on strengths rather than limitations. Over time, as you (and your clients) grow and change, goals will similarly evolve. Using a psycho-educational model to teach wellness components has allowed you to see how change in one area contributes to changes in others, and has helped you review and internalize the components of holistic wellness. This process can lead to *self-perpetuating growth*, whereby your wellness choices lead to positive lifestyle changes that result in more positive choices. In order to clarify further, three student experiences are provided that model wellness planning or lack of planning.

Student Experiences

The following case studies were chosen to demonstrate the application of wellness approaches in three individual students in one online training program. Emphasis is placed on the areas of wellness that may have been compromised, and on particular wellness issues that could arise for online graduate counseling students. For all cases, the authors provide details or insight from their experiences with similar cases and in facilitating wellness among counselor-trainees. The reader is charged with using these examples as strategies for case conceptualization from a wellness-oriented framework, to promote personal growth and development and optimize wellness in one's own life.

The Case of Jesse: Elementary School Teacher

Jesse is an elementary school teacher in her mid-30s who is entering her first semester in an online counseling program to pursue her dream of being a school counselor. She has been married for 8 years and has two children, one 6 years old and one 3 years old. Prior to entering graduate school, Jesse's overall wellness would be considered well-balanced. Her Coping, Physical, and Social Selves are addressed by her routines with her family and friends that include walking with her family when she gets home, cooking dinner for her family, and meeting once a month with other neighborhood moms for a "Moms' Night Out." Jesse would say her Creative Self thrives at work with her students and when she is with her children. Along with her monthly moms' meeting, Jesse's Essential Self is fulfilled with weekly church attendance.

Three weeks into her graduate program, Jesse's life has changed. Her spouse reports that she has been irritable and has snapped at the children twice in the past week. Jesse has her first major assignment due at the end of the week, and she has fallen behind on her readings. To catch up, she declined to attend this month's mom's night and she has had trouble fitting in her daily walk with her family.

In Jesse's Introduction to Counseling class, her instructor teaches about the Wheel of Wellness and the Indivisible Self. Jesse evaluates her own schedule and wellness routines to see where she may incorporate some of the ideas from class. Immediately she notices that her Coping Self has been neglected as she is no longer walking nightly with her family and she missed her monthly night with friends. In turn, this has affected her Creative Self as she is having a hard time concentrating on her work and controlling her emotions with her family. She is also worried about the effect this has had on her Physical Self.

Jesse's instructor asks that each member of the class identify a wellness area that they might be able to increase. Jesse chooses to focus on her Coping Self, particularly stress management through better time management. Her goal for the week is to increase her time management by multitasking more. Jesse makes an effort every day to bring her tablet with her so she has instant access to her courses and her ebooks. While she is waiting for her children as they participate in after school activities, Jesse reads. When she is at the doctor's office, she works on her courses. She takes any free moment she finds to jot down thoughts about assignments and to do her course readings.

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After a week of this routine, Jesse has noticed a change in her schedule. The extra moments of reading have added up in her daily schedule, and Jesse was able to incorporate her family walks back into her schedule. Not only has this impacted her Physical Self, but she has also noticed an improvement in her Social and Creative Selves. Jesse is feeling emotionally positive again and no longer snaps at her family members. By targeting one area of wellness (Coping Self), Jesse has impacted other areas of wellness (Physical Self, Social Self, Creative Self, and Essential Self) therefore improving her overall wellness.

The Case of Alex: Internship Issues

Alex is single, in his mid-20s, and works one full-time and one part-time job. He has completed most of his required courses in an online clinical mental health counseling program. Prior to and during graduate school, Alex would report his overall wellness to be "okay." Working two jobs to help pay off student loan debt coupled with his graduate studies has increased the amount of time spent in his Creative Self. To counterbalance this, Alex goes to the gym for an hour each morning before work to relieve stress (Physical Self, Essential Self, and Coping Self), and he spends at least 1 night a week with friends or family (Social Self).

Alex has felt stressed during his online counseling program but has never felt the level of stress he felt during his first week of internship. Alex's program requires that he earn at least 4 hours per day for 5 days a week throughout the semester in order to be certain he will meet the minimum internship hours required. Alex had already arranged to only work at his part-time job on the weekends but says he still feels crunched with full-time work, internship, and supervision for his internship course. Alex continues to go to the gym every morning and feels he cannot say no to his friends when they invite him to go out after working his part-time job.

By the sixth week of internship, Alex's wellness has slipped on the back burner. He has fallen behind on his work for his internship course (Creative Self), he is overwhelmed at work (Coping Self), and has isolated himself from colleagues (Social Self), and he has cut his daily trips to the gym (Physical Self, Essential Self). He has noticed an increase in somatic symptoms such as tightness in his muscles and chest, racing heartbeat, and exhaustion. By Week 7 of his internship, Alex has caught a virus and can barely get out of bed. After conversations with his advisor, Alex withdraws from internship to allow himself time to heal and work on a wellness plan to take him through internship in a future semester.

The Case of Andrea: Family Emergency

Andrea works full-time at a local lawyer's office. She is a single mother in her late 30s pursuing her clinical mental health counseling degree. Andrea is in her fifth course in the program and feels she has adapted her wellness routine to her graduate course work and her daughter's busy after school schedule. She often completes readings and assignments for her graduate classes at a local coffee shop while her daughter is participating in after-school activities (Creative and Coping Self). She and her daughter create meal plans and grocery shop on Sundays (Social, Essential, and Coping Self) so that they can cook together during the week (Social Self). Andrea completes most of her schoolwork while her daughter is also doing homework, but she sets the boundary to always go to bed by 11 pm (Coping and Essential Self).

Andrea's semester is progressing as she planned when she receives a call from her sister regarding their mother who has fallen ill. Andrea was asked to check in on her mom since she lives an hour from the hospital and her sister lives four hours away. The prognosis on her mother is not hopeful, so Andrea wants to be sure to spend as much time with her mom as possible.

For the next week, Andrea has been spending most of her time after work at the hospital or traveling to and from. Andrea has seen a reduction in wellness in her Coping, Social, and Physical Selves due to her daughter staying with friends and the absence of home cooked meals. Andrea feels stressed to complete her schoolwork on time, and she has a hard time concentrating on tasks related to work or school (Creative Self).

Andrea's mother passes after only a week in the hospital. Grief stricken and hoping to get back on track with her schoolwork, Andrea logs on to finish a course assignment only to realize she does not have enough time to put enough work into her assignment to earn an A. She panics. Before she realizes what has happened, Andrea has e-mailed her professor to say that this assignment is too hard and she wants to quit.

Andrea's professor is aware of the stress Andrea is under and schedules a phone meeting with her. Together, Andrea and her instructor discuss Andrea's wellness and how they can develop a plan to help her get back on track. Andrea chooses to focus on her Social Self by allowing herself to spend more time with her daughter. Andrea's professor agrees to give her an extension on her assignment so that Andrea may spend more time with her family and to help plan the funeral. Through this discussion, Andrea realizes she has been

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over working to earn an A and that she can afford to earn a B on the upcoming assignment. Together Andrea and her professor work to complete a schedule of deadlines for Andrea to follow for the duration of the course and Andrea agrees to communicate once a week with her professor regarding her plan. Andrea immediately notices a difference in her stress level as a result of setting realistic expectations for her schoolwork and spending more time with her family.

Summary

This chapter focused primarily on the wellness of the online student. Counselor wellness is imperative if we are to be able to foster wellness in clients. Two wellness models were described, along with strategies for integrating wellness approaches through case studies. Specifically, we discussed ways in which counselors can assess their own wellness strength and growth areas, positively impacting one's own ability to balance family, work, and school, as well as evaluate outcomes. This is an intentional first step in enabling online counseling students to move in the direction of fostering wellness-centered treatment plans with their clients.

Additional Resources and Readings

- 8 ways to take control of your time. (n.d.). Bigfuture by *The College Board*. Retrieved from <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-started/inside-the-classroom/8-ways-to-take-control-of-your-time>
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About the Authors

Melissa Wheeler, PhD, NCC, ACS, is a distance clinical professor in the Department of Counseling and Special Populations at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. She has experience teaching a variety of online graduate level courses including introductory courses for new graduate students. Dr. Wheeler is excited to share her experiences helping students transition to the world of graduate school, while maintaining balance in their lives. Her research interests include supervision of counselors-in-training and the experiences of first-generation college students. Specifically, Dr. Wheeler is interested in research and strategies to support first-generation college students in the transition from high school to college as well as teaching counselors to best support these students throughout the career choice process. She has presented her work at state, regional, and national conferences to increase awareness around the experiences of first-generation college students.

Laura Shannonhouse, PhD, NCC, LPC, is an assistant professor at Georgia State University. Her research interests focus on multicultural training in counseling, with an emphasis on community engagement, crisis intervention and disaster response, aging, and development across the lifespan. Her research and clinical work have included working with marginalized populations in a variety of contexts both domestically (e.g., crisis center, cancer center, college counseling center, hospital, etc.) and internationally (e.g., illness-related trauma counseling in South Africa, grief work in day care center fire disaster in Mexico, disaster response in post-Katrina New Orleans, and Haitian refugees post-earthquake, etc.). Dr. Shannonhouse has disseminated her work through peer-reviewed publications and presentations at local, national, and international conferences, and received research and best practice grants from the Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES), Southern

Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors (SACES), and Chi Sigma Iota International. Dr. Shannonhouse is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the State of North Carolina, a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC), and an Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Trainer (ASIST).

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