

HEALTH AND WELLBEING [2]

In the previous article we discussed 'Wellbeing' as quality of life including not only wealth and employment [or volunteering], but also the built environment, physical and mental health, education, recreation and leisure time, and social belonging.

During my Veterans' Health Week visit to Broken Hill, I was afforded 10 min to address and interact with reps from the veteran community.

Those present were responsive and I discovered that Broken Hill has good networking among GPs, allied health practitioners and service providers associated with the hospital. It was also pleasing to discover that at least one psychologist promotes an 'holistic' approach and encourages individual care plans based on self-management principles.

This approach calls for hospital discharge planning, GP and specialists to improve the health of participants by:

- Providing ongoing planned and coordinated care from a GP and a nurse;
- Educating and empowering participants to self manage their conditions; and
- Encouraging the most socially isolated to participate in community activities.

Most veterans now realise that physical exercise is important for physical and mental health. I want to draw your attention to warming-up, stretching and breathing exercises as equally important components of your 'holistic' approach. Such activities are now being offered by many service providers under the label: Meditation and Mindfulness.

You don't learn 'mindfulness' – it just develops as you practice any warming-up, stretching and breathing exercises for 60 to 90 minutes. Like in martial arts techniques, mindfulness is a way of thinking about and approaching life that allows us to transform our experience moment by moment. Meditation and mindfulness open you up to a world beyond your personal self and, over time, a whole new appreciation of life and your place in the world.

Mindfulness skills address the underlying processes we use to perceive, understand and react to our experience of the world. As we become more mindful the way we relate to our feelings and thoughts becomes softer, more fluid and clearer.

Mindfulness-based education cultivates greater self acceptance, sharpness of mind and a sustained inner ability to counter stress. By changing the way we approach, think and feel about challenging situations we see new solutions and opportunities. By taking the skills and acting with them, we help our own way out of negative thought and behaviour patterns and depression. This frees us to function better, be more productive and better enjoy the life we live.

Mindfulness training is especially useful for transforming difficult and challenging situations. As we change our approach, new ideas and options open up, enabling us to feel less stuck and consequently more able to access different choices - choices and decisions that are kinder and wiser. Go for it.

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