



Leaflet 2

Disability, health & wellbeing

The relationship between disability, health and wellbeing:

Three points about health formed the basic components of the face validity of WHO's health measurement strategy¹:

- that health is a determinant of, but does not coincide with, wellbeing
- that health is a function of states or conditions of the human body or mind, constituted by the person's intrinsic capacity to execute specific tasks and actions in a range of domains that capture the full breadth of human functioning
- that health is an intrinsic feature of the individual

Wellbeing and the 'disability paradox':

"The *disability paradox*" essentially refers to why many people with serious and persistent disabilities report that they experience a good or excellent quality of life when, to most external observers, these individuals seem to live an undesirable daily existence.

This could be due to a '*secondary gain*' which occurs when individuals with impairments adapt to their new conditions and make sense of them². Individuals who experience disability can find an enriched meaning in their lives secondary to the disability condition.

Keeping fit:

There are a number of online resources which may help you to navigate through some of the challenges you may face when trying to exercise.

There is information about exercising with a disability on the NHS website:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-active-with-a-disability/

It is also relatively easy to find videos on YouTube and the like on how to exercise with a number of different impairments. Of course, it is always wise to seek specific advice from any physiotherapy, rehabilitation or other specialist team that you may be under before undertaking these. They are often very well placed to point you in the direction of suitable resources to help you exercise regularly and safely.

If you are unable to undertake anaerobic exercise for a period of time for some reason, simply keeping moving can still be hugely beneficial. Undertaking even five minutes of *Tai Chi* or *Qi Gong* per day can still provide immense benefits and many of these can be adapted to the seated position if needed.

Getting involved:

¹ <https://bmcmedicine.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12916-017-1002-6>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10390038>

Getting involved in team-based activities can be very beneficial when you have a chronic health condition or disability. A sense of belonging, being able to contribute and being accepted as an equal member of a team can have hugely positive impacts upon our mental health and wellbeing.

Becoming involved in community activities, especially in green spaces³, can have a very positive impact upon mental wellbeing, as well as providing a degree of exercise to improve physical health.

Looking after yourself:

When working in a demanding career whilst having a long-term health condition or disability, work-life balance becomes a priority.

Ideally, a higher salary than some other professions, should be used to allow you to reduce your working hours and responsibilities in order to be able to manage sustainably your chronic health conditions whilst also maintaining a meaningful career. However, the temptation is to take advantage of the salary and place your family in a situation where you can then not cope financially without it. Clearly, if a disability or condition is acquired later on in life, this situation may already exist and can then be very difficult to adjust. However, if a chronic condition becomes apparent earlier in life, it may then be possible to plan family finances in such a way that this is achievable.

The impact of all of these complex dynamics upon the mental health of the doctor in question can be highly significant. Remember to eat healthily, moderate alcohol carefully and allow yourself the occasional treat. Plan in regular activities that you enjoy and that are achievable. Plan in regular activities which involve exercise and green spaces with family, friends and community in order to keep your mental health as good as it can be.

If there are times when your mental health suffers, refer yourself to NHS Practitioner Health for advice and support as early as possible.

This leaflet is a summary of our more extensive Factsheet 2. For more in-depth information on the following topics, please refer to this document which can be found on the NHS Practitioner Health and the Disabled Doctors Network websites

-  The relationship between disability, health and wellbeing
-  Wellbeing and the 'disability paradox'
-  Secondary conditions
-  The nature of conditions: progressive, recurring, fluctuating
-  Alternative terminology: relapsing & remitting
-  Keeping fit
-  Getting involved
-  Work
-  Looking after yourself

www.practitionerhealth.nhs.uk

www.disableddoctorsnetwork.com

³ http://www.ukmaburbanforum.co.uk/documents/papers/jpmh-6_3-burls.pdf