

Chapter 1

The Amazing World of Food

The Wellness Triangle

Directions Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

What does the word *health* mean to you? To some people, health means the absence of disease or illness. If you're not sick, you're healthy. To other people, health means being physically fit. To them, an athlete in prime physical condition is a person with good health.

In contrast to these ideas, health professionals have discovered that good health actually means much more. Someone who is physically well but worries all day is not totally healthy. An athlete who excels at a sport but has no friends is missing a component of good health.

Components of Wellness

Instead of seeing health as one-dimensional, many experts think of health as a triangle. Each of the three sides represents a necessary part of complete wellness.

- ◆ **Physical health or wellness.** One side of the triangle represents physical health. A person's level of physical health is evaluated in a number of ways. Signs of good physical health are infrequent illnesses, plenty of energy for work and play, the ability to concentrate on tasks, and a healthy appearance. Good physical health is maintained through proper nutrition, regular physical activity, and getting enough rest and sleep.
- ◆ **Psychological or emotional health.** A second side of the wellness triangle is psychological or emotional health. Good health in this area is demonstrated by positive feelings, feelings of confidence and love, and an ability to meet the demands of daily life successfully. This ability establishes a sense of self-worth and satisfaction.

- ◆ **Social health.** The third side of the wellness triangle is social wellness. Social development begins at an early age with skills expanding throughout life. With good health in this area, a person gets along with others, makes and keeps friends, and develops a sense of belonging. An ability to work and play cooperatively with others is also evident.

When wellness is at its best, each side of the wellness triangle is strong, which creates a *balance*. However, if any side is neglected, the sides are not equal, and total wellness is threatened. By paying attention to all aspects of your health, you can bring a healthy balance to your life.



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Thinking Critically

1. How does an equilateral triangle represent balance when considering a healthy life?

2. If the physical side of a person's wellness triangle is suffering, how will that affect the person's total well-being or wellness?

3. How can food help or hinder a person's psychological or emotional health?

4. Can using food in a social context improve a teen's social well-being? Explain your answer.

5. Why should people work to achieve balance in their wellness triangles?

For Further Study

- ◆ How would you rate your physical health? (Are you active? Do you have a balanced food intake? Do you receive eight hours of sleep at night? Do you eat breakfast? Do you practice good grooming habits?)
- ◆ How would you rate your social health? (Do you enjoy talking to people? Do you maintain friendships? Are you trustworthy and fun to be with?)
- ◆ How would you rate your psychological or emotional health? (Do you respect others' ideas/values? Do you have hobbies/interests, for example, fishing or reading? Do you enjoy or appreciate the arts and culture, such as museums, theater, or festivals? Do you care about others?)
- ◆ Draw a triangle representing your current health or wellness. Label the sides of your triangle. Did you draw an equilateral triangle? Explain why or why not. Write three goals, one for each side of your triangle, that will help you make improvements in your health and wellness. Monitor your progress. After one month, redraw your wellness triangle.