

Solutions

for Resolutions 2011

January 2011

Small changes make a big difference - Kaizen

Melanie Steers, MSW, RSW
EAP Manager

The word Kaizen is Japanese in origin; referring to continuous improvement. The approach has many business applications and has been used in many industries to increase productivity and decrease costs. How can Kaizen work for personal wellness issues?

The premise of Tom Rath and Jim Harter, co-authors of the book WELLBEING The Five Essential Elements¹, is that career, social, financial, physical and community wellbeing are essential to overall personal wellbeing. Apply the continuous improvement approach to each element.

For example:

Career Wellbeing

You spend a large part of your day or week at work. Bringing a level of enjoyment or satisfaction to the work you do affects your overall wellbeing. Build skills in an area of your work which helps you perform at a higher level or simply find the joy in accomplishments which may seem inconsequential to the big picture yet if you remove the drop in the bucket you remove the ripple.

¹ Rath, Tom & Harter, Jim. WELLBEING The Five Essential Elements. New York: Gallup Press

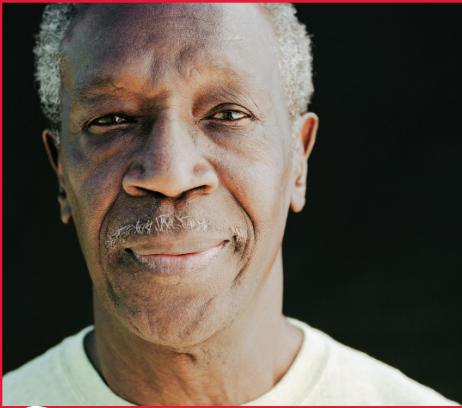
Social Wellbeing

Our relationships with friends and family are the basis of our social wellbeing. Making sure these relationships are healthy, supportive and reciprocal increases the contentment which they can provide. Talking to a friend about life can bring perspective and help you tweak your reactions in stressful or difficult situations.

Financial Wellbeing

As we all can attest to, our financial situation can make or break a mood. We all worry about the future both immediate and long





fseap Now we're talking.

range. If immediate financial issues are making you stress about everything, and with each passing month, it becomes harder to think about the future, it's time to get a handle on the situation and get some help. Tracking all spending for a month and developing a realistic budget are great places to start. There's a great deal of information out there. Look for help that is free and community based or call **fseap**; we can schedule an appointment with a credit counsellor.

Physical Wellbeing

Good physical health is important at any age; yet as we get older, our concerns grow. Maintaining a healthy weight and an active lifestyle help prevent the onset of many age related conditions and illnesses. This is an area in which continuous improvement can be extremely beneficial. Cutting out that second helping at dinner; adding more fruits and vegetables; drinking more water; walking for 20 minutes a day or taking stairs instead of the elevator, are the little changes that lead to healthier living habits and higher levels of physical wellbeing

Community Wellbeing

Ruth MacKenzie, President & CEO of Volunteer Canada states that "Canada's 12.5 million volunteers are agents of social change and their effort, skills and time serve as the foundation for all community services."²

² As quoted in Way to Go Newsletter #23 December 15, 2010 United Way serving Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington

Playing a part in making a difference and being involved at any level in the community enriches not only your own life but the lives of those around you. The effort, time or skills don't need to be onerous. From doing something as seemingly insignificant as paying for coffee for the car behind you at the drive thru to taking a few hours annually to review funding requests for a foundation or local United Way, the investment you make in your community has the potential to last for generations.

The Kaizen approach lends itself to the task of keeping our personal wellbeing on track. It's a matter of small changes, making big differences, over time.



So easy to use

613.549.5561

1.888.409.4499

Emergency After Hours

1.800.668.9920

TTY 1.888.234.0414

fseapkingston.org

(You'll need your assigned username and password to access your custom website. Call for information.)