WHOLE HEALTH: CHANGE THE CONVERSATION
Advancing Skills in the Delivery of Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care

Healing the Healer: Writing Your Own Health Plan
Clinical Tool

This document has been written for clinicians. The content was developed by the Integrative Medicine Program, Department of Family Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health in cooperation with Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, under contract to the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, Veterans Health Administration.

Information is organized according to the diagram above, the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being. While conventional treatments may be covered to some degree, the focus is on other areas of Whole Health that are less likely to be covered elsewhere and may be less familiar to most readers. There is no intention to dismiss what conventional care has to offer. Rather, you are encouraged to learn more about other approaches and how they may be used to complement conventional care. The ultimate decision to use a given approach should be based on many factors, including patient preferences, clinician comfort level, efficacy data, safety, and accessibility. No one approach is right for everyone; personalizing care is of fundamental importance.
Illness happens to them over there, not to us. It starts Day 1 when you go to medical school. The first day you are given a cadaver and told to start opening it up. It immediately distances you. Over there is sickness, illness, patients, disease and death. And you are here. It’s part of the hubris of medicine. It teaches a professional hierarchy over patients and over disease.¹

You are a clinician, a caregiver, and a healer. Although it may not always feel like it, you are a patient too. This clinical tool offers guidelines for writing your Personal Health Plan (PHP) as a clinician. To do so, it is important for you to complete the Personal Health Inventory (PHI) and thoroughly understand the Circle of Health. Just as they are important foundations for building your patients’ PHPs, they are also important for building your own.

Some steps in the process of creating a health plan are the same for everyone; however, clinicians also have unique Whole Health considerations and challenges. It is not the case, unfortunately, that as clinicians we all inherently are able to take better-than-average care of ourselves. While it is true we spend much of our time taking care of others, and while we have more medical knowledge because of our training, care for the caregiver has its own unique challenges. Many clinicians find it more challenging to take care of themselves than to advise others about how to do it.

**Additional PHP Writing Guidelines for Clinicians**

1. Begin by completing the PHI.
2. As you “walk the circle” to determine priorities for your PHP, take some time to answer the questions in Table 1 below. These are written specifically with health care professionals in mind. Refer to the module Taking Action: How to Write a Personal Health Plan for more general information on creating a PHP.
3. Review and spend some time answering the questions for each of the different components of the Circle of Health in the clinical tool Questions Related to Personalized, Proactive, and Patient-Driven Care.
4. Go even farther and take time to fill out the questionnaire Exploring the Circle of Health: How Are You Doing?
5. Download a copy of the Draft Template for a Personal Health Plan. As has been noted before, even listing a few key goals or action items can constitute writing a health plan. For this exercise, however, you are encouraged to invest the time to create a more detailed PHP. This will serve not only to give you more options as far
as what to pay attention to, but also it will help you work more effectively with the form in your clinical practice.

6. As you write your plan, be certain to include a **mission statement**. Some clinicians prefer to do separate ones for home life and for work.

7. Be sure to designate your own personal Whole Health **dream team** as well.

8. Focus on **accountability**. Have a family member, friend, or colleague review your PHP and agree to follow up on it after a set period of time. You might even consider sharing your PHP with your primary care clinician or other members of your health care team.

### Table 1. Heal Thyself: Unique Whole Health Concerns for Health Care Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Me at the Center</th>
<th>Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What really matters to you in terms of your work in health care? Are you fulfilled by your work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As someone who cares for others, how much time do you actually spend tuning in to your own needs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mindful Awareness                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| On a typical day, how much of your attention goes toward taking care of yourself?                                     | Mindful  |
| How many times a day do you notice yourself feeling rushed or under time constraints?                                | Awareness|
| As you think about what led you to enter your profession, do you feel that you have remained true to any ideals you held when you first made that choice? |          |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Care</th>
<th>Self-Care</th>
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**General Questions**

- Of all your work colleagues, who is the best role model for self-care? Do any of your colleagues have health issues? What can you learn from the self-care practices of your co-workers?
- Do you intentionally pause in your work for self-care time, even if it is just for a minute or two?
- Do you follow your own advice when it comes to self-care?

**Personal Development**

- Do you feel fulfilled by your work?
- As you take care of people during the day, do you feel depleted or invigorated?
- How well do you balance “Personal Development” with the other elements on the green portion of the circle? How much, for example, do you focus on your workload at the expense of “Food and Drink,” “Moving the Body,” or “Rest and Refresh”?  

**Surroundings**
• Do you have time to keep your surroundings feeling comfortable and organized to a degree that feels comfortable to you, at home and at work, despite work obligations?
• Have you worked to optimize your clinic space, your office, and your operating suites, so that they are healthy places in which to spend your time?

Working Your Body
• Do you attend to bodily needs during a busy day? For example, do you take time to use the restroom or stretch?
• Is there an exercise facility at work? If so, do you or could you use it?

Food and Drink
• Many hospitals have notoriously unhealthy food. Have you ever made suggestions about offering healthier options in the cafeteria or vending machines?
• Do you take time to eat at work?
• Do people bring in unhealthy snacks and leave them in public areas? What about changing to healthier offerings?
• Do you drink fluids (besides coffee) when you are at work? Enough of them?
• Speaking of caffeine, how much do you rely on it when you are working?

Recharge
• Does working in health care energize you or deplete you?
• When you work a late shift or take a call, do you allow your body to regroup afterward? Do you take steps to prepare in advance?
• If you have a rough day or deal with something tragic, do you have effective ways of helping yourself to bounce back?
• Is your life balanced? It has been said we should spend 8 hours a day on work, 8 on play, and 8 on sleep. How well do you balance the three?

Family, Friends, and Co-Workers
• Are patients treated well where you work? Are they satisfied with their care?
• How well do you know your co-workers? Could you work together to support one another’s self-care?
• Do you feel you could see people at work socially?
• What are the best things about your relationships with your boss and other co-workers?
• Has your work ever strained relationships with family and friends?

Spirit and Soul
• Do you find meaning in your work? Is it possible to find more, and if so, what would that take?
• Do you behave at work in a way that is consistent with your beliefs and values, while respecting the beliefs and values of others?
• How do you do with letting things go when you make a mistake? If you focus on forgiveness, how well do you forgive yourself relative to forgiving others?

Power of the Mind
• Do you ever find that you are caught in the mindset, common with many high achievers, of delayed gratification (e.g., “I'll focus on that after...”)?
**WHOLE HEALTH: CHANGE THE CONVERSATION**
Clinical Tool: Healing the Healer: Writing Your Own Health Plan

- What stress reduction techniques do you use at work to calm yourself down or to ease stress for patients or colleagues?
- Are you ever excessively emotional at work? Why or why not? Is this okay? How do you handle bad outcomes?

**Professional Care**
**Prevention and Treatment**
- Do you ever self-treat, rather than seeking another’s help for your health care needs?
- How well do you meet your own needs versus downplay them?
- Do you ever feel as though your patients receive better health care than you do? Worse? Why is that, and what can you do about it?

**Conventional and Complementary Approaches**
- Do you ever take time for a massage, an acupuncture session, a yoga class, or some other, similar experience?

**Community**
- If you could choose five people at work to be on your own personal Whole Health team, who would they be? Why?
- How do you do with being a patient in a health care system where you are also a practitioner? Do you ever avoid care so as not to be treated by someone you know?

*To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.*

—Confucius

**Additional Resources**

**For more information about health planning and care for clinicians**

- Lipsenthal L. *Enjoy Every Sandwich: Living Each Day as If It Were Your Last.* Random House; 2012.
Whole Health: Change the Conversation Website

Interested in learning more about Whole Health? Browse our website for information on personal and professional care.

http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/index.php

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References