



## Editor's Notes

### EVOLVING DEFINITION OF HEALTH PROMOTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The premier issue of the *American Journal of Health Promotion* included a definition of health promotion that was written to guide our editorial content. Three years later, in 1989, I revised the definition to stress my belief that providing supportive environments is the most effective way to change and maintain positive health behavior. Now, 19 years later, I am working to revise the definition to incorporate three new concepts: 1) striving for balance in the five dimensions of optimal health is a more realistic goal than achieving balance; 2) people will be more motivated to achieve this balance when they discover the synergies between their core passions and each of the five dimensions; and 3) enhancing motivation and providing opportunities for positive health practices are the strategies most likely to help people start and maintain positive health practices.

The three definitions are below. I would be very interested in hearing your reactions to this newest revision and will finalize it after considering all the comments I receive. Comments should be sent to [Feedback@HealthPromotionJournal.com](mailto:Feedback@HealthPromotionJournal.com)

A more complete discussion of the evolving definition is in an article titled "The Face of Wellness: Aspirational Vision of Health, Renewing Health Behavior Change Process and Balanced Portfolio Approach to Planning Change Strategies" in *The Art of Health Promotion* at the back of this issue.

#### Original 1986 definition

"Health promotion is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is defined as a balance of physical, emotional, social,

spiritual, and intellectual health. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of efforts to enhance awareness, change behavior and create environments that support good health practices." (O'Donnell, *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 1986,1,1,1)

#### 1989 Revision

"Health promotion is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is defined as a balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of efforts to enhance awareness, change behavior and create environments that support good health practices. Of the three, supportive environments will probably have the greatest impact in producing lasting change." (O'Donnell, *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 1989,3,3,5)

#### 2008 Tentative Revision

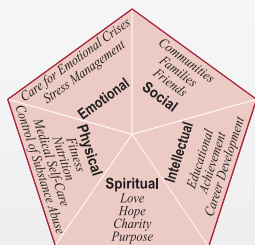
Health promotion is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is the process of *striving* for a dynamic balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual health and discovering the synergies between core passions and each of those dimensions. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of efforts to enhance awareness, increase motivation, build skills and most importantly, to provide opportunities for positive health practices. (O'Donnell, *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 2008, 23.2)

*Michael O'Donnell*

Michael P. O'Donnell, PhD, MBA, MPH

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## DIMENSIONS OF OPTIMAL HEALTH

### Definition of Health Promotion

“Health Promotion is the science and art of helping people change their lifestyle to move toward a state of optimal health. Optimal health is defined as a balance of physical, emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual health. Lifestyle change can be facilitated through a combination of efforts to enhance awareness, change behavior and create environments that support good health practices. Of the three, supportive environments will probably have the greatest impact in producing lasting change.”

(O’Donnell, *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 1989, 3(3):5.)

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