

INTRODUCTION

Taking Care of Body, Mind, and Spirit

Thank you for your interest in *Paths to Wellness*. *Paths to Wellness* is a workbook that brings together the work I have done over the past 23 years. It is a reflection of my philosophy and beliefs about what makes good treatment and how I like to work with people. It is a “blending” of many treatment models and draws information from a variety of philosophies and cultures into a single source. It addresses sexual abusive behavior, anger, and aggressive behavior. I hope you will find the chapters of this workbook both interesting and helpful in your personal recovery program.

Different cultures from around the world hold many things in common. For example, each culture has different foods often based on animal and plant life common to that region. These sources of food meet the basic need to eat, sustain life, and nourish the body. In many cases, different languages exist in these cultures, and each language meets the basic need for people to communicate with each other and meet mental challenges. In addition, every culture or society provides various ways for their people to have spiritual growth and a sense of belonging and connection. However, people in every culture have four universal or basic needs: the need to belong, the need for mastery, the need for independence, and the need to be generous.

Many cultures consider life to be a part of a cycle. In some cultures the term “Cycle of Life” is used and in others the “Life Cycle.” In many aboriginal cultures the “Circle” is the sacred symbol of life. For example, when we look at the life cycle of human beings, we all come into the world as infants, tiny human beings totally dependent on our parents and caregivers for our safety and well being. All human beings grow and progress through the life cycle which includes a variety of stages and life phases. The cycle of life begins with the event of birth and then progresses through various phases, each following another. We begin as toddlers, then young child, then older child, teenager, young adult, middle age adult, elder, and eventually the cycle ends with death.

Paths to Wellness will help you learn about different types of cycles and how to improve the quality of your “Life Cycle.” Our lives consist of many different cycles and each cycle is made up of parts. As mentioned above, some cycles are made of stages, phases, or events. Behavioral cycles are made up of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, situations, and may be activated by triggering events. When we are leading healthy, productive lives, we have a healthy life cycle. We are on the path of health and happiness. Sometimes, however, we end up off the path and find ourselves in unhealthy cycles, or even destructive cycles.

Destructive cycles result from unhealthy thinking, mismanaged emotions, having hurtful destructive behavior, or a combination of cycles. These cycles can be self-destructive, destructive to others, or both. For example, a person who has a life threatening disease such as cancer, heart disease, or AIDS, lives in an unhealthy life cycle, but in many cases can be corrected through medical treatment. In some cases, such as cancer, there may be no cures and the individual lives an unhealthy life cycle until death. Even those persons who have cancer try to live a healthy life as long as possible in order to prolong life and make living as good as possible.

For others, the unhealthy life cycle is made up of emotional and behavioral problems. Men who beat their wives, women and men who abuse their children, people who abuse drugs and alcohol, and people who sexually abuse others, all have unhealthy behavioral cycles. These unhealthy, and in some cases criminal cycles, cause the person to have an unhealthy life cycle until the problematic behaviors are treated and corrected.

Paths to Wellness will help you learn how to identify unhealthy and problematic cycles, how to identify the detailed parts of these cycles, how to begin correcting unhealthy cycles, and how to get back on the path to wellness and leading a healthy lifestyle. In this workbook you will learn ways to improve the quality of your life by improving the four aspects of life: the spiritual part, the emotional part, the physical part, and the mental part.

I have attempted to write this workbook in language that is easy to understand. Some of the words and terms in this workbook, however, may not be familiar to you. To keep this workbook user friendly and easy to read, I do not give detailed explanations about many of the words, terms, and concepts addressed in the book. If you come across a word or term you do not understand, I encourage you to look it up in a dictionary. I also encourage you to supplement the use of this workbook with other publications that help you better understand some of the ideas and concepts that may be new to you.

Finally, it is important to use this workbook as part of a treatment program whenever possible, or with the help and guidance of a trained professional who specializes in treating people who have the same problems you are working on. This workbook is not a complete treatment program. If you are not in a treatment program or you do not have access to a professional to work with you, I suggest that you find a relative or a close friend who will talk with you about the material you are learning and give you some feedback on the assignments and exercises you complete at the end of each chapter.