

HOW CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE CAN LIGHT THE WAY TOWARD WELL-BEING

At the start of this year, CHA introduced ReNew Year, an approach to well-being aimed at reinspiring meaning and reestablishing healthy rhythms for those serving the health care ministry.



JILL FISK

ReNew Year developed after CHA members took part in a survey about well-being last fall and some common themes emerged. Survey participants reported varying definitions of well-being, ranging from “body/mind/spirit integration” and “work/life balance” to a definition within the work

context only. Results indicated the desire for a common definition across Catholic health care, and one that would recognize communality as essential. Holistic and equitable care for all was another clear finding.

To this end, CHA’s Well-Being Task Force, comprised of leading experts from member systems who have been convening since early in the pandemic, concluded we must return health care team members to the joy of vocation and purpose, reinvigorating God’s healing ministry of Jesus through our shared mission, vision and values. The task force recommended CHA support well-being efforts as indicated by survey findings: propose a vision of well-being as a Catholic health ministry, host webinars that highlight best practices and enhance well-being spiritual care resources.¹

In our distinctive identity as a Catholic health ministry, we have an opportunity to firmly commit to well-being as central to who we are, not just as a means to reduce burnout among team members, as important as that is in itself.

Representing approximately 700,000 associates, CHA is uniquely positioned to shine a light on the fundamental importance of “attending to the whole person” to promote or sustain well-being for all.

The Christian anthropology — what we profess about love and the human person in relationship to God — informs our shared identity and shapes our core commitments related to well-being.

How might we draw from this anthropology as we continue to develop our approach and models for well-being? As one survey respondent urged: “How do we create an organization that people want to work for and would not leave for anything, and that patients seek out over others? What does that look like? ... How do we create a culture of excellence ... that in and of itself draws the best of the best in staff and causes patients to seek us out? How do we draw God’s love and compassion in to guide us daily in the creation of such an organization?”

CHA’s ReNew Year approach was designed with these key points in mind. Our call was to redesign well-being resources for leaders — simply and immediately. The revised framework offers leaders a daily rhythmic approach to reinspire purpose and meaning with their teams and to connect with God, themselves and one another.

A MODEL FOR SELF-CARE

As CHA’s well-being offerings were developed, we closely examined other well-regarded pro-



grams that promoted whole-person health. One excellent approach is found in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Circle of Health model.² At the center of the model is the individual, and one's practice of mindful awareness supports key areas of self-care: moving the body; surroundings; personal development; food and drink; recharge; family, friends and coworkers; spirit and soul; and power of the mind.

ReNew Year took some inspiration from the self-care aspects of the Veteran Affairs' model but places them within a weekly rhythm for employees. Each day is aligned around a theme with focus questions and an assortment of corresponding prayers, reflections, audio or video meditations, articles or homilies for leaders and their teams to reinspire and engage in purposeful work. The week consists of Mission Monday, Time to Think Tuesday, Wonder Wednesday, Thankful Thursday, Refocus Friday and Worthy Weekend for Saturday and Sunday.

A MINISTRY ROOTED IN LOVE

One of CHA's recent Health Calls podcasts unveiled ReNew Year's approach to well-being. Deeper than mindful awareness, the podcast highlighted how well-being is a realization of God's love that informs our call to serve.³ As a ministry of compassionate care rooted in love, we receive love in order to extend it. This is the differentiator from other models of well-being. It informs our beliefs, thoughts and actions. Love is what compelled our founders to be the hands and feet of God in a ministry of healing. And, prayer is what keeps us centered in love — to God and to one another — and it returns us to our relationship with love itself. Any response to organizational well-being in Catholic health care must begin in this way.

Second, a model of well-being in Catholic health care must wholly return people to one another. To be whole and healthy, we must be in community with each other. And in this, one's own well-being manifests in direct proportion to another's. Is it truly possible to be "well" if an-

other's well-being is not being fulfilled? We were created to love, live and move through our relationships with others. We are called by love and formed by it through being loved, both by God and by others. Well-being, then, is far more than self-care: it is an essential component of the human experience. The ministry has continued in this way from the very beginning.

A CONTINUING ROAD TO WELL-BEING

To thrive in the future and in the current health care environment — where workers are in high demand, have a variety of employer options and have the flexibility to choose — how might we improve current models of well-being that promote whole-person care and human flourishing? How might Catholic health care raise a collective voice as a national health care leader to define well-being distinctly through the lens of our Catholic identity? How might returning to the most basic human elements of connection and relationship improve employees' joy and meaning in their work, and, ultimately, restore patients' well-being?⁴ If we choose the right path, the ministry and our teams can only continue to shine.

JILL FISK, MATM, is director, mission services, for the Catholic Health Association, St. Louis.

NOTES

1. "ReNew Year," Catholic Health Association, <https://www.chausa.org/well-being/renew-year>.
2. "Circle of Health Overview," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/circle-of-health/index.asp>.
3. Diarmuid Rooney and Jill Fisk, "A Fresh Approach to Well-Being in Health Care," Health Calls, Catholic Health Association, January 24, 2023, <https://catholic-health-usa-podcast.simplecast.com/episodes/a-fresh-approach-to-well-being-in-health-care>.
4. Brian P. Smith, "Mission: Back to the Basics," *Health Progress* 103, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 62-64, <https://www.chausa.org/publications/health-progress/archives/issues/spring-2022/mission-back-to-the-basics>.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

www.chausa.org

HEALTH PROGRESS®

Reprinted from *Health Progress*, Spring 2023, Vol. 104, No. 2
Copyright © 2023 by The Catholic Health Association of the United States
