

## **Introduction to the Whole Health Skill-Building Courses**

**Description:** The Whole Health skill-building courses are designed to be taught by a Whole Health coach or other educator to a group of Veterans who are interested in advancing their Whole Health. There are eight courses, one for each of the eight self-care circles in the VA Circle of Health.

It is assumed that Veterans have already been introduced to key Whole Health concepts before they take any of these courses. That is, they have heard in general about what Whole Health is and they have completed a Personal Health Inventory and begun to think about topics they would like to include in their Personal Health Plan (PHP). If they are not familiar with core concepts, instructors are welcome to incorporate some of the slides below, which describe some key aspects of the Whole Health approach, including:

- The Circle of Health
- The “Zeroing in Circles” – and how they relate to the Circle of Health
- The Whole Health System
- The Principles of Personal Health Planning
- The definition of Mindful Awareness

If a Veteran has completed a PHI and are now trying to decide what they might do next, these courses are appropriate next steps. The courses drill down with each of the green circles into “subtopics” related to each circle, with practical suggestions about specifics of what they can put into a PHP.

**Key Elements of Each Course:** All of the courses share the following common elements:

- Each course includes about 15-20 minutes of lecture material from PowerPoint slide presentations. Otherwise, the PowerPoint slides are used to facilitate discussions or guide experiential learning.
- Each course includes 15-30 minutes of large and small group discussion.
- Each course also includes a 5-10 minute mindful awareness script, written specifically for that self-care topic. A course instructor can read the script during the course. (There is even a generally useful Mindful Awareness exercise, “Setting and Holding Intentions,” that accompanies this introductory module and may be used wherever a facilitator might like.)
- Courses also feature a demonstration, ideally offered colleague from the local VA with special interest in a particular area of self-care. For example, this may include a chaplain for the Spirit & Soul course, a psychologist for Power of the Mind, or a dietitian for Food & Drink. These experts have the opportunity to demonstrate a skill or technique they use with their Veterans and can help with other parts of the course, too, as appropriate.
- Finally, each course includes a 15-minute goal setting opportunity, during which Veterans pair up and take turns outlining their own goal related to the green circle that is the focus of the course. After each course, participants

will emerge with a realistic (SMART) goal for that topic, as well as a follow up plan to guide next steps.

**Supporting Materials:** Courses typically have five documents, or files, that accompany them:

1. A PowerPoint slide set. There are between 30-38 slides in each presentation. Some slides are optional. The idea is that these will provide the foundation for a 60-80 minute course. Instructors may choose to add other slides related to the local site.
2. A faculty guide. These cover the following:
  - Learning objectives
  - A sample agenda
  - Information on course preparation, including pre-reading instructors can do, materials and handouts to accompany the course, AV suggestions, and ideas regarding how to tailor the course to their specific site
  - Slide-by-slide information about how best to present each slide's content
3. A mindful awareness experience script. Instructors can read these scripts to guide participants through a mindful awareness experience specific to each course's subject matter. All of these practices can be done outside of the classroom environment as well, if Veterans so choose
4. A four-page Veteran handout. The first two pages of the handout are a summary of the key points for the course. The next two pages are a list of links and apps Veterans will find helpful.
5. An Evaluation Forms. The all-purpose evaluation form should be completed at the end of any course.

## General Slides Instructors may Choose to add to a Given Course

The following slides are all in the file, “Skill-Building Course Introductory Slides.” The descriptions related to each are featured in the right column of the table below. These slides are only needed for a group that hasn’t had a general introduction to Whole Health.

<p><b>To Begin, Let's Discuss:</b> <b>What is Whole Health?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puts you at the center</li> <li>• Asks what really matters</li> <li>• Gets you to pause and reflect</li> <li>• Focuses on self care</li> <li>• Uses the team and wellness approaches that work best for you</li> <li>• Gives you resources</li> </ul> <p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start by asking the group what they think Whole Health is, leaving some time for reflection. Remember people need at least seven seconds to process and answer a question</li> <li>• You can use the slide remote to make the definition appear on this slide</li> <li>• It be helpful to have your own definition (elevator speech) as well</li> </ul>
<p><b>Zeroing in on the Self-Care Circles:</b> <b>Personal Health Plan Options</b></p> <p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This slide illustrates how each circle can be broken down into subtopics. A person can work with as many subtopics as you want</li> <li>• Reviewing the subtopics will give people more ideas about what they can put in their PHP</li> </ul>
<p><b>Before we Begin:</b> <b>The Whole Health System</b></p> <p>3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If needed, take them through the three elements of the Whole Health System. You can find a concise description of these at <a href="https://wholehealth.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/414/2018/09/Passport-to-Whole-Health-3rd-Edition-2018.pdf">https://wholehealth.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/414/2018/09/Passport-to-Whole-Health-3rd-Edition-2018.pdf</a> in Chapter 1 of the <i>Passport to Whole Health</i></li> <li>• Be sure to highlight that the Personal Health Plan follows the Veteran through the system, wherever he or she may be going – working with a peer partner, trying a complementary approach, or seeing their clinical team. That is why the “Personal Health Plan” circle is featured in the middle of this diagram</li> </ul>

**Before we Begin:**  
**Personal Health Planning**

4

- This slide is also for a general intro if needed. It reviews how Personal Health Planning occurs. By now, participants have likely completed a PHI or in some other way identified their mission/aspiration/purpose (MAP) as well as an area where they would like to start working on some goals
- The next step is to set shared goals and arrange next steps, which is the emphasis of the two quadrants the arrows are pointing to. What goal are they going to set, and how are they going to reach it? How will they hold themselves accountable? Who will help them, and what tools do they need?

**What is Mindful Awareness?**

- Way of being
- In the present moment
- On purpose
- Non-judgmentally
- With kindness

*When you can be more aware, you might have a better sense of:*

- What matters to you
- How you can bring it more fully into your life
- Who/what can help you with that

- This slide is a very general introduction to mindful awareness
- Remember, mindful awareness is a general term. Mindfulness is usually linked to one very specific meditation program, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction. Meditation can include practices to cultivate mindful awareness, but it can have other areas as its focus as well