



# Strengthening Youth Mental Health by Targeting Wellness in SBIRT

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# Purpose

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Gain an understanding of wellness and its essential role in holistic substance use prevention and early intervention practice for strengthening the mental wellbeing of youth and young adults.



# Session Objectives

1. Describe common models of wellness and how wellness relates to substance abuse, prevention, and mental health.
2. Examine the mental health effects of the Big 3 wellness-promoting lifestyle behaviors of regular physical activity, breakfast and nutrition, and sleep on youth.
3. Explore a 4-step evidence-based SBIRT model that holistically integrates substance use prevention and intervention with wellness for enhancing the mental health of young people.

# Wellness Definitions & Models

# Health as Wellness

A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948).

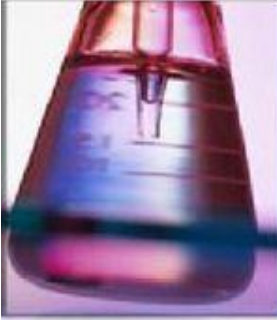
Wellness is a multi-faceted construct.

No consensus on the definition or dimensions of wellness.

# High-Level Wellness for Man & Society

- The “father” of the wellness movement (Halbert L. Dunn, 1959).
- The Health Grid

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1372807/?page=3>



# The Health Grid



# Role of Wellness in Substance Abuse Treatment & Recovery

- **Wellness in Drug Addiction Treatment**
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9567584/>
- **Impact of Wellness on Recovery**
- <https://facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/2019/09/13/the-impact-of-wellness-on-recovery/>
- **Incorporating Wellness into Treatment**
- <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/substance-abuse/4/incorporating-wellness>





# SAMHSA's Wellness Initiative

- **Definition:** Not the absence of disease, illness, and stress, but the presence of a positive purpose in life, satisfying work and play, joyful relationships, a healthy body and living environment, and happiness.
1. **Wellness Integrates Behavioral and Physical Health:** The wellness approach recognizes that the mind and body are interconnected and that behavioral health is inseparable from physical health.
  2. **Wellness Is Empowering and Prevention Oriented, Unlike the Disease Treatment Model:** This approach emphasizes having positive goals, learning self-management skills, and **developing healthy habits** (Swarbrick et al., 2011, p. 329; Swarbrick, 2014, p. 11).
  3. **Wellness Is a Journey, Not a Destination:** Wellness is a lifelong journey of striving for good mental and physical health and quality of life, to the best of a person's ability, given his or her unique circumstances.

# Wellness is Multifaceted with Interactive Dimensions

1. **Emotional:** Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
2. **Environmental:** Enjoying good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
3. **Financial:** Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
4. **Intellectual:** Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
5. **Occupational:** Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
6. **Physical:** Recognizing the need for **physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep**
7. **Social:** Developing a sense of connection and belonging; and having a [good] support system
8. **Spiritual:** Expanding one's sense of purpose and meaning in life  
[Swarbrick, 2014, p. 13; adapted from Swarbrick, 2006, p. 311]

# Creating a Healthier Life: A Step-by-Step Guide to Wellness: *Improving Our Physical Wellness*

- 1. Nutrition: Do you have access to fresh, healthy food?**
- 2. Physical activity: Are you getting regular physical activity whenever you can, and making it fun?**
- 3. Sleep: Are you getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night whenever possible?**
- 4. Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs: Have you tried tools that can help you cut down or quit using tobacco products, alcohol, or other drugs?**
5. Medication safety: Are you storing medications properly and reviewing the expiration dates?
6. Preventive medicine: Do you visit your doctor, dentist, or other health care provider for routine care and monitoring?

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Creating-a-Healthier-Life-/SMA16-4958>

# Health-Related Quality of Life & Well-Being

1. New topic area for *Healthy People 2020*
2. Healthy People 2020 Goal: **Improve HRQOL for all individuals**
3. HRQOL is a multi-dimensional concept that includes domains related to physical, mental, emotional, and social functioning.
4. **Well-being (i.e., wellness)** is a relative state where one maximizes his or her physical, mental, and social functioning in the context of supportive environments to live a full, satisfying, and productive life.
5. ***Instead of the traditional view of prevention as only avoiding or minimizing illness and risk factors, well-being also focuses on disease resistance, resilience, and self-management***  
(<http://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>)

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/health-related-quality-of-life-well-being>

# Bi-Directional Relationships Between Wellness & Mental Health

Substance use/misuse ↔ Mental health  
(Negative association)

Other lifestyle behaviors ↔ Mental health  
(Positive association)

# Substance Use Prevention & Early Intervention is Too Exclusionary

1. Overly focused on individual types of substance use, rather than factors influencing substance use more generally.
2. Largely avoids addressing healthy lifestyle behaviors that can enhance substance use prevention and intervention as well as mental and physical health outcomes.
3. Substance use prevention and early intervention should expand to be more inclusionary in its targeting of **protective health promoting behaviors** that will advance the **wellbeing, performance, and happiness** of youth, families, and communities.

# Clustering of Lifestyle Risk Factors Among Adolescents in 89 Countries

1. 82.4% of adolescents had  $\geq 2$  risk factors, while 34.9% had  $\geq 3$ .
2. Adolescents aged 16–17 years, compared to those aged 11–13 years, had higher odds of reporting  $\geq 3$  risk factors.
3. The co-occurrence of cigarette smoking, alcohol drinking, physical inactivity, and low fruit and vegetable intake was 165% greater in females and 110% greater in males than expected.
4. Early prevention strategies targeting **clusters of lifestyle risk factors** should be prioritized to help mitigate future burden of non-communicable diseases globally.
5. *Preventive Medicine, 2020:*  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S009174351930438>

# Big 3 Lifestyle Behaviors: Both Sides of the Mental Health Coin

1. **Physical Activity** (Physical activity and sports vs. Physical inactivity and excessive screen time)
2. **Diet** (Healthy breakfast and food consumption vs. Skipping breakfast and underconsumption of healthy foods)
3. **Sleep** (Adequate sleep and sleep quality vs Inadequate sleep and poor sleep quality)



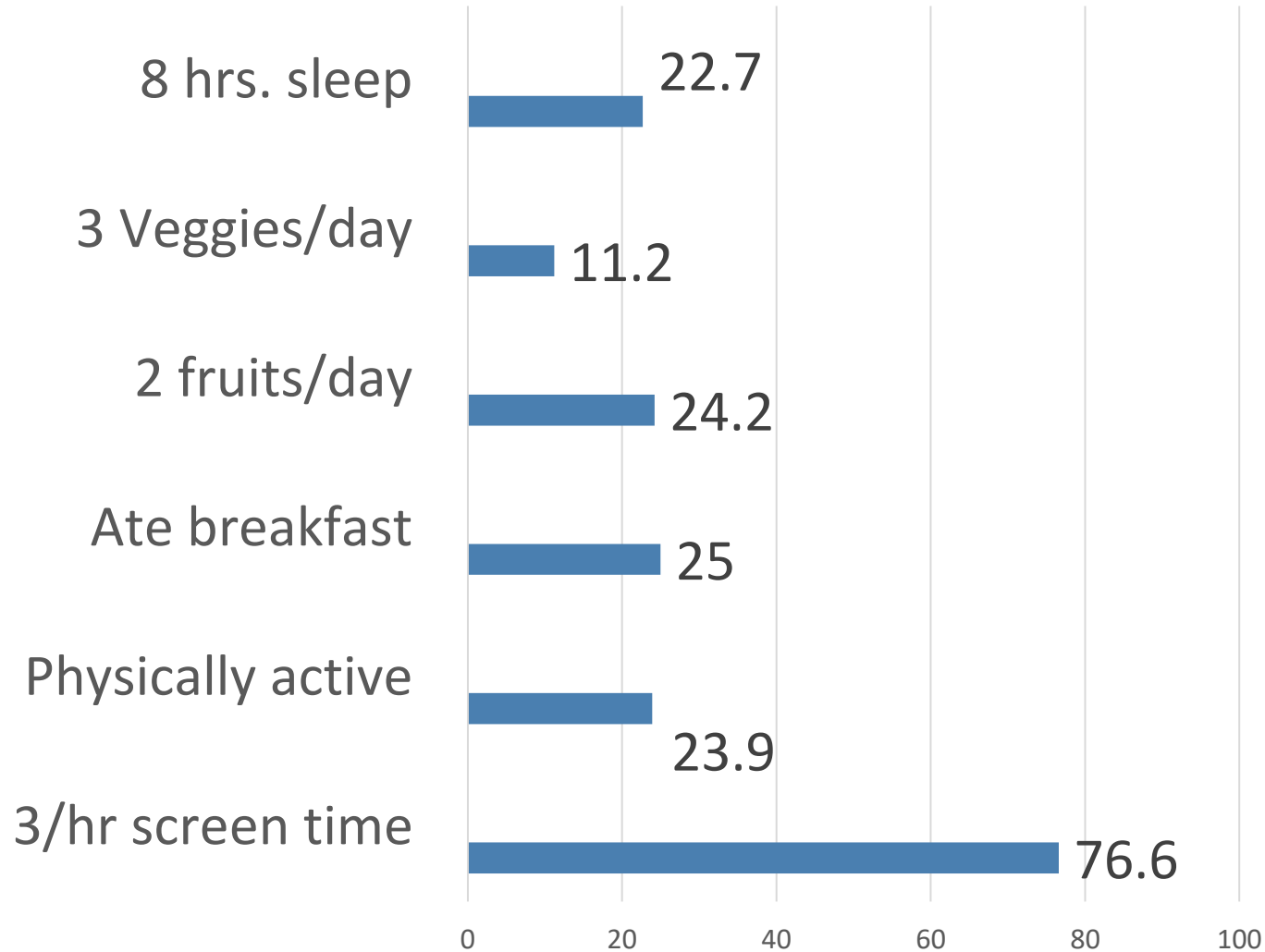


# Youth Multiple Health Behavior Guidelines

- 1) 1-hour physical activity every day
- 2) Limit recreational screen time
- 3) Healthy breakfast every day
- 4) 3 vegetable servings every day
- 5) 2 fruit servings every day
- 6) 8 hours sleep each night
- 7) Avoid alcohol & drug use
- 8) Practice a daily relaxation technique

<https://preventionpluswellness.com/pages/healthy-lifestyle-guidelines-for-youth-and-young-adult-goal-setting>

## % Behavior



HS Adolescent  
Other Lifestyle  
Risk Behaviors  
(YRBS, 2021)

# 6 Reasons for Targeting Lifestyle Behaviors to Integrate Prevention & Mental Health

1. Youth are exposed to multiple health risk behaviors
2. Lifestyle behaviors are interconnected and influence each other
3. Healthy lifestyle behaviors protect against substance use/misuse
4. Lifestyle behaviors protect against and improve mental health
5. Targeting healthy lifestyle behaviors address with the ultimate goal of prevention & intervention: wellness
6. Healthy lifestyle behaviors empower youth to choose **positive identities and futures**

# Why Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors?

**Healthy lifestyle behaviors are essential to successful and sustained substance use and misuse prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.**

**People with serious mental or substance use disorders are dying decades earlier, mostly from preventable, chronic medical conditions caused by lifestyle (SAMHSA, 2021).**



# The Teen Brain: Prevention & Mental Health Implications

1. The **prefrontal cortex** is still developing so that **decision-making and impulse control can lead to risky behaviors.**
2. Many **mental disorders** emerge during adolescence.
3. Teen brain may be **more vulnerable to stress.**
4. ***Plasticity allows it to change, adapt and respond to its environment, including physical activity and other healthy lifestyle behaviors and pro-social activities.***
5. **Teens need more sleep and yet have greater melatonin levels late at night.**

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-teen-brain-7-things-to-know#:~:text=The%20teen%20brain%20has%20lots,the%20brain%20mature%20and%20learn.>

# Mental Health Effects of the Big 3 Lifestyle Risk Behaviors



# Physical Inactivity and Youth Mental Health

1. **Psychological distress**
2. **Depressive symptoms**
3. **Lower mental wellbeing**
4. **Lower life satisfaction**
5. **Less happiness**

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8872491/#:~:text=Physical%20inactivity%20is%20inversely%20associated,happiness%20in%20youth%20%5B29%5D>

# Poor Eating Effects on Youth

- being overweight or obese
- tooth decay
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- heart disease and stroke
- type-2 diabetes
- osteoporosis
- some cancers
- **depression**
- **eating disorders**

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/is+your+health+at+risk/the+risks+of+poor+nutrition>



# Skipping Breakfast Effects on Youth Mental Health

1. Higher risk of stress
2. Depression
3. Psychological distress
4. Anxiety in adolescents

[https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnut.2022.871238/full#:~:text=In%20a%20meta%2Danalysis%20\(8,found%20similar%20findings%20\(9\).](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnut.2022.871238/full#:~:text=In%20a%20meta%2Danalysis%20(8,found%20similar%20findings%20(9).)

# Inadequate Sleep Effects on Youth

- 1. Thinking and Academic Achievement**
- 2. Emotional Health**
3. Physical Health and Development
- 4. Decision-Making and Risky Behavior**
5. Accidents and Injuries

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>

The background is a complex, abstract composition of overlapping, irregular shapes in various shades of green, purple, blue, and grey. Some shapes contain smaller, lighter-colored patterns, such as dots or smaller shapes, creating a layered and textured effect.

# Mental Health Benefits of the Big 3 Lifestyle Behaviors

# Benefits of Youth Sports & PA

(President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020)

[https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS\\_Report\\_OnePager\\_2020-08-31\\_web.pdf](https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2020-09/YSS_Report_OnePager_2020-08-31_web.pdf)

# Mental, Emotional & Social Benefits

- 1. Lower rates of anxiety and depression**
- 2. Lower amounts of stress**
- 3. Higher self-esteem and confidence**
- 4. Reduced risk of suicide**
- 5. Less substance abuse and fewer risky behaviors**
- 6. Increased cognitive performance**
- 7. Increased creativity**
- 8. Greater enjoyment of all forms of physical activity**
- 9. Improved psychological and emotional well-being for individuals with disabilities**
- 10. Increased life satisfaction**

# Benefits of Youth Healthy Eating

(CDC Healthy Schools)

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/facts.htm>

(Academy of Nutrition &  
Dietetics, 2021)

<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/healthy-eating/5-reasons-your-teen-needs-breakfast>



# Mental Health Benefits of Eating Breakfast

- 1. Energy: Along with sleep and exercise,** breakfast is one of the best ways to recharge your batteries and avoid mood swings.
- 2. Improved Concentration:** Studies suggest that eating a nutritious breakfast **improves brain function — particularly memory and recall.**
- 3. Better Grades:** Research shows students who eat breakfast perform better **academically which can impact self-esteem and self-efficacy.**
- 4. Healthy Choices:** Those who eat a morning meal tend to **make healthier food choices throughout the day,** which can positively impact long-term health.

# Benefits of Youth Sleep

(Sleep Foundation, 2022)

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>





# Mental Health Benefits of Sleep

1. **Thinking and Academic Achievement:** Sleep benefits the **brain and promotes attention, memory, and analytical thought.**
2. **Emotional Health:** Most people have experienced how sleep can affect **mood, causing irritability and exaggerated emotional reactions.**
3. **Physical Health and Development:** Sleep contributes to the **effective function of virtually every system** of the body including the brain.
4. **Decision-Making and Risky Behavior:** Sleep deprivation can affect the development of the **frontal lobe**, a part of the brain that is critical to control impulsive behavior.



## 2 Strategies for Integrating Prevention, Early Intervention & Wellness

- 1. The Piecemeal Approach**
  - a. Implement individual programs, campaigns and strategies (e.g., SBIRT) to prevent SU & increase single health behaviors.
  - b. Very costly in time and dollars.
  - c. Status quo & least holistic & comprehensive.

2 Strategies  
for Integrating  
Prevention,  
Early  
Intervention &  
Wellness

## 2. The Integrated Approach

- a. Implement programs, campaigns and strategies like SBIRT that integrates SU prevention and intervention with wellness behavior promotion.
- b. Most cost-effective, integrated & holistic.
- c. But how???

# The Role of Brief Interventions (BIs)

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1. Brief interventions have a **decades-old history of successfully** influencing both substance use and healthy behavior change.
2. They are identified as an **evidence-based practice** by multiple health agencies, such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)(<https://www.samhsa.gov/sbirt>) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP):  
<https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/aap-policy-statement-screening-brief-intervention-and-referral-to-treatment/>
3. Brief interventions have the potential to **increase public health reach** to broader youth populations across diverse settings when compared to more intensive or lengthy prevention programs:  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4864856/>



# Youth Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)

- Youth SBIRT is designed to reduce the effects of youth substance use by equipping primary care and behavioral health providers with the tools they need to prevent it.
- The SBIRT process includes:
  1. SCREENING to identify an adolescent's place on a spectrum from non-use to substance use in order to deliver an appropriate response.
  2. BRIEF INTERVENTION (BI) to raise patient awareness of risks, elicit internal motivation for change, and help set behavior-change goals.
  3. REFERRAL TO TREATMENT (RT) to facilitate access to and engagement in specialized services and coordinated care for patients at highest risk.

# Physical Activity (PA) Interventions to Reduce Youth Substance Use: A Review (*Substance Use & Misuse*, 2018)

- **Aim:** To review PA interventions for adolescents.
- **Results:** Suggest that PA interventions may decrease substance use in teens. Most studies utilized group sessions to deliver interventions, but decreased substance use was associated with one-time, multi-health consultations (e.g., SBIRT).
- **Conclusions:** School-based interventions targeting multiple health behaviors may offer a particularly effective and efficient way to decrease substance use in adolescents.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10826084.2018.1452338>



## 4-Step Evidence-Based SBIRT Model for Integrating SUP/I & Wellness to Strengthen Mental Health

1. **Screening:** Identify youth at risk AND Increase behavioral reflection
  2. **Prevention + Intervention Feedback:** Integrate & motivate behavior change to prevent & reduce SU and promote healthy behaviors **for all youth**
  3. **Goal Setting:** Initiate **multiple behavior** change **for all youth**
  4. **Follow-up:** Referral to treatment AND Promote continued goal setting **for all youth**
    - This model has been used to create two evidence-based screening and brief interventions (i.e., SPORT Prevention Plus Wellness for youth and InShape Prevention Plus Wellness for young adults, and numerous other programs for youth, adults, parents and media campaigns)
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## Holistic SBIRT Model: Levels of Integration

- SBIRT + multi-health behavior SBI
- Prevention + intervention
- SU + healthy behaviors/wellness
- Wellness + mental health



# Step 1: Use Screening To ID Youth SU Risk Level AND Increase Health Behavior Reflection



1. Reflecting upon one's health behaviors is the **first step in changing personal habits.**
2. Assessing which substance use and healthy behaviors you are currently engaged in is essential for **increasing awareness of your health risks and strengths.**
3. **Thinking about specific steps you can take to improve each of your health behaviors** is a necessary first step in setting goals to improve your habits.
4. Using **screening surveys or asking questions** is a great way to enhance reflection on one's health behaviors.

# Screening Surveys & Questions



- Validated screeners, e.g., CRAFFT or S2BI
- Screening questions to increase reflection:
  1. Do you usually get 1 hour or more of PA every day?
  2. Do you sleep 8 or more hours most evenings?
  3. Do you eat breakfast most days a week?
- Additional reflection questions placed throughout feedback, e.g., What types of PA do you like or think you'd like to try in the future?

# Step #2a: Positive Feedback and Highlight Benefits of Healthy Behaviors, Especially Positive Future Images for All Youth

1. Providing **positive feedback tailored** to individual current health behaviors may increase efficacy.
2. Identifying the **benefits of engaging in each healthy behavior will increase positive expectancies** which in turn increases motivation to participate in those behaviors.
3. **Positive future images, as well as images of peers engaging in specific healthy habits are associated with one's personal identity** and are desirable outcomes that **hold particular motivational strength**.
4. Unconscious positive future images associated with engaging in healthy behaviors **can be cued using image terms and illustrations**, unleashing their motivational force.

# Step #2b: Feedback Illustrating How Substance Use Harms Healthy Habits & Benefits for All Youth

1. **Linking how specific substance use harms or interferes with achieving healthy behaviors is key to addressing multiple health risks within a single SBIRT or program.**
2. These messages should **also illustrate how substance use sabotages achieving the positive benefits and desired future images** associated with participating in specific healthy habits.
3. These messages should demonstrate how using alcohol, e-cigarettes, cannabis, or opioids, for example, counteract the beneficial effects of healthy behaviors and **prevents one from reaching desired goals in life.**

Step #2c:  
Feedback  
Addressing  
Other Known  
Risk Factors  
For  
Substance  
Use for All  
Youth

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In addition to linking specific substance use to healthy behaviors, it's important to **target other known risk factors for using substance use** to strengthen brief multiple behavior interventions.

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These risk factors include **perceived harmfulness of using substances, social norms, drug myths, resistance skills, environmental influences, and healthy alternatives** to using substances.



## Step #3: Multiple Health Behavior Goal Plan for All Youth

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1. Setting goals, particularly **short-term goals**, is essential to **initiating and achieving behavior change**, as well as **developing self-regulation skills and self-efficacy**.
2. Goals should be **specific**, that is **measurable**, as well as **achievable**.
3. **Multiple behavior goals** should be set to **prevent substance use while increasing one or more healthy lifestyle behaviors**.
4. Build in **contract co-signatures** and **calendar logs** to enhance motivation and monitoring.



# Step #4: Referral to Treatment AND Follow-up To Promote Continued Goal Setting & Monitoring for All Youth

The more youth set, monitor and achieve short-term goals the more they will increase their self-regulation skills and self-efficacy.

**Following-up to remind youth to keep resetting goals every week** is key to them achieving long-term goals resulting in improved physical and mental wellness.

# Professional Reflection/Homework

- **List 3 concrete actions** you can take to integrate wellness (i.e., healthy lifestyle behavior) promotion into your prevention or intervention practice for enhancing the mental health of youth in your region.





# Conclusions

1. Wellness is associated with less SU and greater mental health while prevention and intervention is too exclusively focused only on individual SU behaviors.
2. The Big 3 wellness-promoting lifestyle behaviors are associated with mental health protection and promotion and less SU.
3. A 4-step evidence-based SBIRT model can be used to holistically integrate substance use prevention and intervention with wellness for enhancing the mental health of young people.



For more information...



- **About Prevention Plus Wellness SBIRT:**

<https://preventionpluswellness.com/pages/p-screening-brief-intervention-referral-to-treatment>

- **View PPW SBIRT programs:**

<https://preventionpluswellness.com/products/ppw-screening-brief-intervention-referral-to-treatment>

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