

PROMOTING HOLISTIC FITNESS FOR ENHANCED HEALTH AND EFFECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE 21 ST CENTURY NIGERIA

AGWUBIKE E. O. ¹

INTRODUCTION

Fitness is the quality of life that pertains to physical, mental- emotional, and family social wellbeing. In order to promote holistic fitness for enhanced health and effective entrepreneurship, concerned individuals should embrace activities and programmes related to fitness promotion and disease prevention. They should be self-directed to be able to comprehend fitness promotion and disease prevention concepts and strategies. These will involve comprehending how their bodies function, ways to prevent diseases and other health/fitness problems, how their behavior influences their fitness status, and ways to promote fitness.

The philosophy of holistic fitness therefore emphasizes the unity of the mind, spirit and body operated in a harmonious and multifaceted physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual and environmental wellbeing. It is expected to provide a framework for relying on oneself to create a life in which the inner self is more in harmony with everything in the environment. In effect, it emphasizes the maximization of individual potentialities to make life and job as meaningful and harmonious as possible

In holistic fitness, every aspect of life for entrepreneur is affected: body, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and feelings, including the quality of one's physical surroundings, state of fitness/health of family members, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances; the satisfaction and enjoyment one gets from one's daily activities, and the success of one's relationships with others. Holistic fitness is therefore a dynamic

¹ DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND HUMAN KINETICS,
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN - CITY, NIGERIA.

and harmonious equilibrium of all the elements and forces making up and surrounding a human being (in the context of this topic, an entrepreneur).

When we realize that we are operating a nation at risk, in terms of health/fitness, the need to emphasize on health/fitness promotion and development reforms become pertinent. Such reforms should hinge on standards and status. Therefore, the holistic fitness approach to promote healthy life by reducing impaired life which ultimately increases one's life expectancy becomes the answer. In it, the entrepreneur's quality of life is enhanced to promote the quantity of life by increasing such a person's year of functional and healthy life as a proportion of his/her life expectancy (Insel & Roth, 2006). It is on this premise that fitness and health promotion programmes in a holistic form become instituted to create a lasting change within an entrepreneurial organization. Such promotive program the resultant changes are expected to become systematized and integrated into the organization and the healthy entrepreneurs, in turn, internalize the relevant changes.

This paper is divided into four sections to help maximize the impact of the holistic fitness programme on the organization's goal of enhancing health and effective entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Nigeria.

The four sections include:-

i. The Unity of Body, Mind and Spirit;

ii. The Dynamic Holistic Fitness Continuum;

iii. The Model of Holistic Fitness Dimensions/Components; and

iv. Holistic Fitness Programme Approach in an Organizational Setting or For Effective Entrepreneurship.

Understanding these four sections leads us to promoting a combination of educational, organizational, economic, and environmental supports for behaviours that are conducive to fitness, health and productivity. They can also serve as avenues for helping people change their lifestyles to move towards enhanced health and effective entrepreneurship for higher productivity in the 21st Century Nigeria.

The Unity of Body, Mind and Spirit in Promoting Holistic Fitness, Health and Entrepreneurship

As individuals or entrepreneurs grow and develop, they must be able to integrate ways in which physical, mental, emotional, and social changes influence their fitness status. It is when this state is achieved that such individuals operate with a sound mind housed in a sound body, which are being directed and guided spiritually to demonstrate a high standard of ability to use goal-setting and decision-making skills that enhance health and fitness as

well as promote entrepreneurship. Therefore, the emphasis should be on “Mens sana in corpore sano” (a sound mind in a sound body), represented in *fig. 1*.

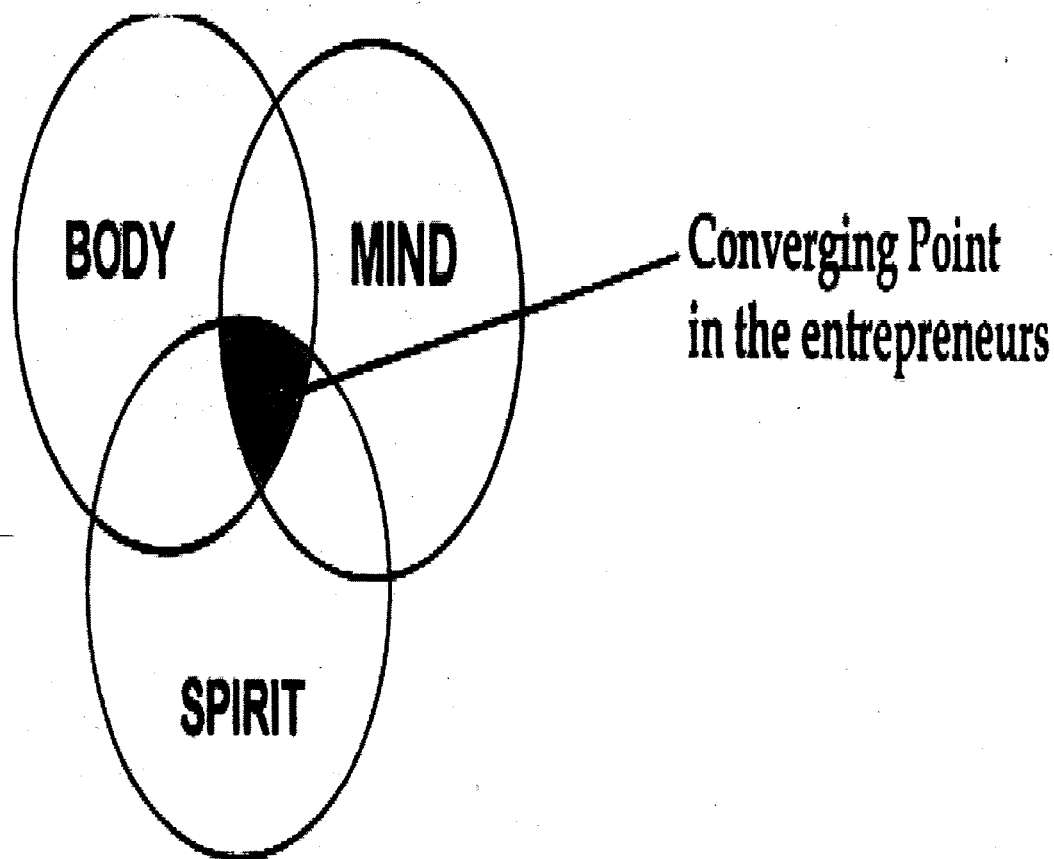


Fig 1: Unity of Body, Mind and Spirit in Holistic Fitness

The holistic view of fitness recognizes that the human mind and body make up a single organism (Edlin & Golanty, 1992), which is being directed for operations (or entrepreneurship) spiritually (fig 1). No human body exists without a mind; no mind exists without a body. It should be noted that people are integral mind-body entities which have considerable importance to holistic fitness. It should be emphasized that for what goes on in the mind can produce changes in the body's tissues and organs that may either increase or decrease overall fitness status, health and wellbeing.

Thoughts and feelings can alter body physiology and chemistry because thought and feeling centres in the brain influence the activity of the nervous system, endocrine (hormone) system, and immune system, all of which influence body physiology. Therefore, people for entrepreneurship and to deliver health education can improve on their fitness and health by what they think, do and feel as well as by what they eat and their entire lifestyle.

The mind can be used to heal one's body and to improve one's fitness and health. In order to do this most effectively, there is the need to know how the mind functions and how physiology, the workings of the body -can be affected by one's mental state. There is an increasingly large body of research that supports the idea that the human mind is extremely powerful in altering physiology (Edlin & Golanty, 1992) to produce harmonious integration of body, mind and spirit.

The Dynamic Holistic Fitness Continuum

Holistic fitness operates in a dynamic nature with greater number of people enjoying the moderate or average fitness status (fig. 2).

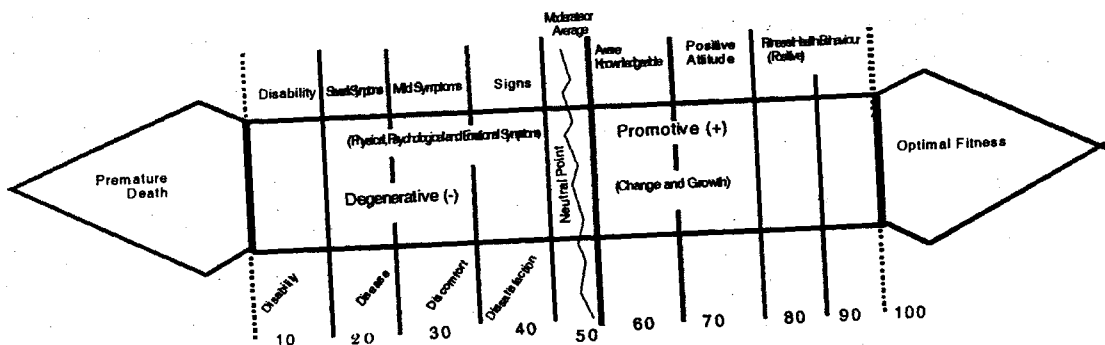


Fig 2: Dynamic fitness continuum(scale)

Each influence can be either positive or negative. If positive, it is viewed as a *Plus* (+) while a negative influence depicts a *Minus* (-). It should be noted that a person's fitness status fluctuates on a fitness continuum (scale) depending on whether the influences are positive or negative. The negative aspect measures the "5 d's"-dissatisfaction, discomfort, disease, disability and death. The positive aspect embraces the concept of positive fitness or wellness which focuses on the living state rather than on categories of disease that may cause morbidity (disease) or mortality (death). In the view of Edlin and Golanty (1992), positive fitness (wellness) involves:-

- i) being free from symptoms of disease and pain as much as possible;
- ii) being able to be active, in terms of ability to do what one wants at the appropriate time, and
- iii) being in good spirits most of the time.

These characteristics indicate that holistic fitness is not something that is suddenly achieved at a specific time. Rather, it is an ongoing process, depicting a way of life through which one develops and encourages every aspect of one's body, mind, and feelings to interrelate harmoniously as much of the time as possible. It is therefore when an individual operates under this state of body and mind being harmoniously spirit-driven that he/she

has the physical, mental and psychological mind-set to effectively and efficiently engage in any aspect of entrepreneurship with huge success. The dynamic holistic fitness continuum depicts the scale or ranges on the quality of life from optimal fitness to high level fitness status, average fitness, low-level fitness, high low level fitness, and premature death. On the other hand, when the entrepreneurs embrace fitness/ health promotive activities and positive attitude to life, there is every assurance that they should enjoy high level holistic fitness that grows towards optimal fitness. This level of fitness which determines a person's degree of wellbeing and performance capacities in exercise and work/job is influenced by certain factors over which a person has some degree of control: good nutrition, adequate and regular exercise, good psychological orientation to manage stress and embrace good behaviours.

Holistic fitness is an expression of one's wellness which has six key components, namely: physical, psychological, social, spiritual, intellectual, and environmental. The components are highly interrelated so that what affects one of them indirectly affects the others. They are represented in *fig 3*

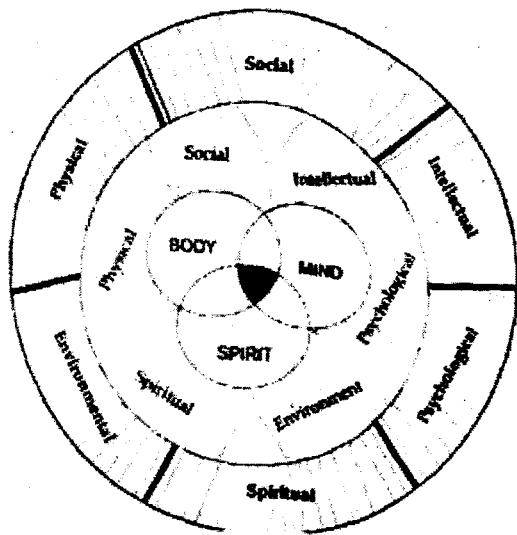


Fig 3: Components of Holistic Fitness

Each of these elements of the holistic fitness components is rooted in the body, mind and spirit bedrock. Their functionality is highly interrelated and intertwined, so that what affects one of them radiates and affects the others. Each is discussed subsequently.

Physical Fitness

Promoting adequate physical fitness requires us to feed our bodies nutritiously, exercise them regularly, avoid harmful behaviours and substances, watch out for early signs of sickness, and protect ourselves from accidents (Hales, 2001) at homes, on the road, and on the job as well as learning about and getting regular medical and dental checkups. Recognizing that physical fitness has two

major components – the health related and the performance - related, we need to develop and promote each of them adequately (Agwubike, 2005). On the health-related component, one's muscular strength, muscular endurance, cardio-vascular endurance and flexibility should be well developed. In addition, evolving and maintaining proper nutrition and exercising regularly and adequately which are the beckon of promoting and maintaining ideal or desirable body weight should be habituated. When these are properly promoted one's organic functions become assured which invaluablely promotes the health/fitness status. On the performance - related component, the elements of power, speed, balance, coordination, agility and reaction time should be adequately developed and promoted. When these elements are properly promoted, the individual's rate of skill acquisition and perfection becomes well guaranteed.

Psychological Fitness

This refers to both emotional and mental states of the entrepreneur relating to his/her feelings and thoughts. It involves awareness and acceptance of a wide range of feelings in oneself and others, the ability to express emotions to

function independently, and to cope with the challenges of daily stressors (Hales, 2001). In the view of Donatelle, Snow-Harter and Wilcox (2006), psychological fitness involves one's ability to respond in a positive, healthy manner to life's challenges using personal, social, environmental, and physical resources. Fahey, Insel and Roth (2003) indicated that optimism, trust, self esteem, self acceptance, self confidence and self control are just some of the qualities and aspects of holistic emotional/psychological fitness or wellness. Drug abuse, severe bouts of depression, dysfunctional relationships, and many other negative reactions to crisis reflect low levels of psychological fitness or wellbeing.

Social Fitness

This pertains to one's ability to interact effectively with other people and the social environment, to develop satisfying interpersonal relationships, and to fulfill social roles. It involves participating in and contributing to one's community, living in harmony with fellow human beings, developing positive interdependent relationships with others and practicing healthy sexual behaviours (Hales, 2001). In the view of Blonna and Levitan (2000),

human sexuality is best examined by using a holistic, multifaceted approach. Social fitness also requires us to have mutually loving, supportive people in our lives.

Spiritual Fitness

This refers to a higher or divine power that gives greater significance to individual life. Being spiritually fit or healthy enables the person to identify his/her basic purpose in life; learn how to experience love, joy, peace, and fulfillment; and help ourselves and others achieve their full potential (Hales, 2001). To enjoy spiritual fitness involves possessing a set of guiding beliefs and principles, or values that give meaning and purpose to our lives, especially during difficult times (Fahey, Insel & Roth, 2003). It is an antidote to anger, fear, anxiety, self-absorption, and pessimism.

Intellectual Fitness

This refers to self-awareness to use one's mind to gather, process, and act on information, to think critically through one's values; to make decisions, set goals, and figure out how to handle a problem or challenge (Hales, 2001). It relates to how one thinks and learns from life experiences, openness to new ideas,

and the capacity to question and evaluate information. An intellectually fit person has a high motivation to master new skills, as well as having a sense of humor, creativity, and curiosity.

Environmental Fitness

This entails the impact that one has on the world or planet and vice versa, particularly on the person's health and wellbeing. It involves protecting oneself from dangers in the air, soil and water, and in products one uses as well as working to preserve the environment itself (Hales, 2001). Environmental fitness involves fashioning out personal or collective modes of reducing or protecting environmental threats to health, such as hazards of ultraviolet radiation in sunlight, or and water pollution, and harmful industrial chemicals.

Holistic Fitness Promotion Programme in an Organizational Setting (or for Effective Entrepreneurship)

In the context of promoting enhanced health and effective entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Nigeria, holistic fitness promotion in an organizational setting should adapt a combined three - level programmes

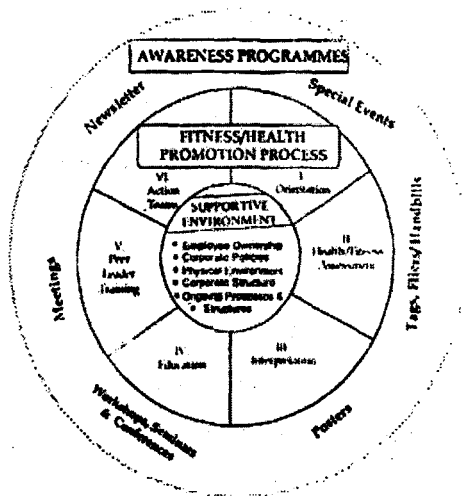
approach, proposed by O' Donnel (2000) involving:-

Level I: Awareness

Level II: Lifestyle Change Programmes

Level III: Supportive Environment.

These three levels of programmes should be combined into a comprehensive programme as represented *in fig. 4*. No doubt, a holistic fitness programme that provides these three, combined levels of programmes will provide the entrepreneurs with the best opportunities to achieve organizational goals of reducing fitness/health care costs, enhancing its image, and stimulating improvement in productivity as well as ensuring effective entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Nigeria



Adapted from O' Donnell (2000)

Fig 4: A three level Fitness Promotion Programme for Effective Entrepreneurship.

LEVEL I: AWARENESS

Awareness may be regarded as a way of infusing or impacting establishment conditions and information on people which is capable of changing their behaviour relating to knowledge, skills, interest and understanding. It is a way of knowing that something exists which is capable of changing the person's or people's behaviour or lifestyle. The awareness programme is expected to increase the people's (workers/entrepreneurs) level of awareness or interest in promoting holistic fitness for enhanced health and

for effective entrepreneurship. Examples of relevant awareness programmes for such fitness and health behaviour change include: newsletters, posters, fliers, health fairs, educational classes, weekend retreats, and health and fitness status screening without feed-back and follow-up. It should be emphasized that awareness programmes have different impacts on different people, depending on their level of readiness to change. Generally, awareness programme can be used as direct feeders to the lifestyle change programmes. An awareness programme stimulates the interest in making changes among people not yet ready to make changes while for those that have made changes, the programme reinforces the progress already made and motivates such people to continue progressing. Moreover, awareness programmes can be of value to employers by making the programme visible to employees and serve public relations functions and be a morale booster to outside community. O' Donnell (2000) indicates that awareness programmes can also be an inexpensive way to get started in health/ fitness promotion, and can stimulate management to develop more extensive programmes. Awareness programmes alone are not sufficient for fitness/health

promotion, hence their being operated in conjunction with other programmes. This necessitates the level II programme.

LEVEL II: LIFESTYLE CHANGE THROUGH FITNESS/HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMMES

Lifestyle change programmes advance a step beyond awareness programme by setting lifestyle related behaviour change as their desired outcome. O' Donnell (2000) reveals that the most successful lifestyle change programmes use a combination of health education, behaviour modification, experiential practice, social support, incentives, and feed-back opportunities. He further indicated that successful programmes also allow sufficient time to elapse for behaviour changes to occur, manifest and take root.

It should be noted that lifestyle change programmes can result in improved health and fitness status thereby reducing medical problems and medical costs. They can also improve employee's outlook, as well as grant him/her the physical and emotional capacities to be more productive at work. They serve as morale boosters and publicity assurance because of their extensive nature. They also serve as an avenue for employee's socialization, which can, in

turn, help them learn to work together more effectively.

However, the fact that most people find it difficult to maintain their improvements gained from lifestyle change programmes, such as maintaining regular, ongoing physical fitness programmes, O' Donne-11 (2000) recommends incorporating supportive environment programmes to take care of the lapses as the third level approach.

LEVEL III: SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The goal of supportive environment programme is to create an enabling environment, within the work setting, that encourages a healthy lifestyle. This is achievable through creating such environments like changes in the physical setting, corporate policies, and corporate culture; by implementing ongoing programmes; and by enhancing employee ownership of programmes.

Construction of recreational or fitness workout areas, cafeterias with healthful foods are examples of improved physical environment. Corporate policies include instructing managers to encourage employees to participate actively in keep-fit programmes; allowing flexible work schedule to

permit employees to exercise during a specified period during the day (Agwubike, 1993); and funding the medical care coverage programme which rewards good fitness/health status rather than poor health/fitness. Corporate cultures can feature as active participation of top management staff in keep-fit programmes, to serve as role models of healthy lifestyles, providing regular information reports on the fitness or health status and practices of each department, and creating incentive systems to reward healthy lifestyle practices.

Employees' knowledge of the programme serving their interests and their active involvement in its operations and organization assure them the feeling of ownership. In the view of O' Donnel (2000), this feeling of ownership can be fostered by maintaining confidentiality of all fitness- or health-related employee data, actively involving employees in managing and delivering the programme, and requiring employees to pay a token for the programme.

CONCLUSION

Having x-rayed the unity and interrelationship of the human body, mind and spirit as well as the dynamics of holistic fitness continuum,

entrepreneurs will establish a better platform on which to comprehend and practice activities aimed at improving the dimensions or components of holistic fitness.

Applying the tripartite approach involving awareness, lifestyle change and supportive programmes, will undoubtedly ensure improved health and fitness status of entrepreneurs for increased productivity at work. This development underscores the need for promoting *Holistic Fitness* for enhanced health and effective entrepreneurship in the 21st Century Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Agwubike, E.O (1993). Musculo-acrobic Fitness as a Tool for Health and Safety in the Nigeria Manufacturing industry. *Nigeria Journal of Health Education*, 2, (1), 128 - 136.
- Agwubike, E.O (2005). *Physiology of Muscular Activities: Theory Through Question and Answer approach*. Benin City: Osasu Publishers.
- Blonna, R & Eevitan, J (2000). *Healthy Sexuality* Englewood, Morton Publishing Company.
- Donatelle R, Snow-Harter, C. & Wilcox, A (2006). *Wellness Choices For*

Health and Fitness, Boston,
McGraw Hill.

Edlin, G. & Golanty, E. (1992). ***Health and Wellness***, (Fourth Edition)
Boston, Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Fahey, T.D., Insel, P.M. & Roth W.'F.
(2003). ***Fit and Well: Core Concepts and Labs in Physical Fitness & Wellness***. (5th Edition), Boston,
McGraw Hill.

Hales, D. (2001). ***An Invitation to Fitness*** (Instructor's Edition),
Duxbury, Wadsworth
Publishers.

Insel, P.M & Roth, W.T (2006). ***Core Concepts in Health*** (Tenth
Edition), Boston, Me. Graw Hill.

O'Donnell, M. P. (2000). **how to design workplace health promotion programmes** (5th edition),
KeegoHarbour, Michigan,
American Journal of Health
Promotion, I