Learning Guide
Holistic needs

Name:

Workplace:

28524 Describe a person’s holistic needs and their impact on a person’s health and wellbeing

Level 3 5 credits

Issue 1.0
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Introduction

This learning guide is about meeting holistic needs.

How to use your learning guide

This guide supports your learning and prepares you for the unit standard assessment. The activities and scenarios should be used as a general guide for learning.

This guide relates to the following unit standard:

- Unit 28524 Describe a person’s holistic needs and their impact on a person’s health and wellbeing. (Level 3, 5 credits).

This guide is yours to keep. Make it your own by writing notes that help you remember things, or where you need to find more information.

Follow the tips in the notes column.

You may use highlight pens to show important information and ideas, and think about how this information applies to your work.

You might find it helpful to talk to colleagues or your supervisor.

Finish this learning guide before you start on the assessment.

What you will learn

This topic will help you to:

- Understand what holistic needs are.
- Understand the benefits of meeting holistic needs
- Understand the impact of unmet needs
- Understand skills needed to meet holistic needs

More info

If you have a trainer, they should give you all the forms that you need for this topic.
Person-Centred Care

Your role as a support worker is to provide quality individualised care that respects the wishes and needs of the person you support. It is important to understand from a person-centred approach, how responding to holistic needs can promote a person’s health and wellbeing. A person-centred model recognises that everyone is unique and individual, and must be cared for according to their needs, regardless of age, race, religion, social status or disability.

The concept of holistic health is the notion that the physical, social, emotional, mental, cultural and spiritual dimensions of a person must be viewed as an integrated whole. This leads to a broader concept of care in which a person’s holistic needs must be met to maximise health and wellbeing.

Holistic care is not about how much time you spend with a person you support, but rather how the time is used. Being aware of the relationship of holistic needs on wellbeing will influence the care and support you provide. Remember holistic care is a way of:

- Thinking
- Reflecting
- Practicing
Background

A person-centred approach to meeting holistic needs has its origins in humanistic psychology. Humanism emphasises the study of the whole person.

Human development theorists – Abraham Maslow

(1908-1970) and Carl Rogers (1961-1987), suggested that people are multi-dimensional beings and the social, emotional and spiritual aspects of health and wellbeing are as important as the physical aspects. Their theories are briefly outlined below.

Maslow: Theory of Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow identified five sets of needs that people strive to meet. He developed this idea into a format known as ‘Hierarchy of Needs’. A hierarchy is like an ascending set of needs that take you to the next step in the hierarchy. Throughout our lifetime, we can move up and down these steps depending on which needs are met or not met at that time. He believes that all people strive to achieve self-actualisation, a state that can only be achieved, if needs are met at a lower level. Needs not met can have a major effect on a person’s health and wellbeing.
Carl Rogers: Person-centred theory

Carl Rogers also believed that the wellbeing of a person is influenced by the social, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their being. He was particularly interested in the impact of relationships on a person. He believed that a person’s self-identity and self-regard were healthier when others engaged with them in a positive manner and strong relationships were built. He believed this engagement needed to focus on the values, beliefs, feelings, and hopes of the person, not just on supporting the physical aspect of the person.

More info

If you are interested in reading more about humanistic theories, visit the following websites:

- www.learning-theories.com
- www:bapca.org.uk
- www:simplypsychology.org/humanistic
Holistic needs

Optimal health and wellbeing can often be described as the end result of having holistic needs met. To fully understand this concept, it is important to understand how these needs are defined.

Physical Needs

Meeting physical needs is an area of care and support with which people are most familiar. As a support worker you will demonstrate the care of individual needs in many daily tasks you undertake. This may involve personal cares, for example, medications, nutrition, and physical exercise, supporting a person’s mobility or maintaining sensory aids (wheelchairs, hearing aids, and glasses). Meeting physical needs can also include the physical environment and ensuring this is managed in a way that makes the person feel safe and secure such as privacy, warmth, appropriate lighting and positioning of furniture, is better for their overall care. Just as important as these practical tasks is the manner in which you do them. People’s physical health and wellbeing is optimised when they feel involved in their cares, and respect is demonstrated for their preferences, requests and wishes.

Communicating effectively with the person, developing a relationship of trust and encouraging independence in daily tasks are important elements in ensuring physical needs are met.
Spiritual Needs

People often need to feel a connection to something beyond their own being. This may be a link to a faith or belief system. People have identified spiritual needs as ‘experiences of meaning’. Meeting spiritual needs can help a person cope with a changing stage or condition in their state of wellbeing. It can help them find meaning and purpose in life. It gives the person a sense of belonging and connectedness to others with similar values and beliefs. Maintaining particular spiritual rituals can provide spiritual nourishment for serenity and inner peace. Responding to the spiritual needs of a person does not require you to share their beliefs, nor does it mean that as a support worker you have to be an expert in spiritual care. It is about being alert and respectful of the person’s spiritual needs and being able to respond to meeting those needs. This involves listening and talking to the person or their family, whanau and taking the person’s spirituality seriously. It has been found that the ability to practice a faith or spiritual belief is a key quality of life indicator for people who live in residential settings.

Emotional Needs

Emotional needs are often defined as psychological needs that have an origin that usually centres on feelings. Feelings, such as, being appreciated, valued, cared about, loved, understood, validated and accepted. Meeting emotional needs involves the understanding, empathy and support of one person for another. As a support worker, you need to demonstrate sensitivity and consideration for the emotional needs of the person you support. When you do demonstrate support the person feels safe and secure and are more likely to show their feelings, express views and opinions openly and feel they are being listened to. Nurturing and supporting emotional needs develops a person’s self-confidence, which gives them a sense of empowerment and control over their life. Positive emotions provide immediate physical benefits to the person in terms of wellness.

An increased understanding of the person’s emotional needs will lead to compassion, empathy and a sense of connection with the person you support.
A person who has their emotional needs met is more likely to:

- understand and adapt to change
- cope with stressful situations
- have a positive self-concept
- ability to love and care about others
- can act independently

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**Social Needs**

Essentially social needs are met by forging relationships with other people. Having meaningful relationships is a key in achieving quality of life. Meaningful social connections and having people to do things with and talk to, helps a person’s resilience and coping skills in dealing with changes occurring in their life. Social needs can be met through contact with families, partners, friends and acquaintances and community groups. Though family, whanau can be pivotal in meeting social needs. Maintaining links to the community can help a person retain a feeling of connection to the wider world. When a person has their social needs met. They are often more engaged with life around them, motivated to participate and socially aware, and comfortable with their self.

People with a disability or an elderly person living alone, are at risk of social isolation, which can have significant impact on their overall health and wellbeing.
Cultural Needs

These are needs that are met by being part of, or relating to a specific culture or cultures. Culture refers to person’s way of life, including factors such as ethnicity, customs, traditions, upbringing, life experiences, age and hobbies such as sport and music.

There are different types of cultures in which a person can relate to or be a part. A person can exist within several cultures at once and it is important that, as a support worker, you are aware of cultures from this broader definition, rather than just by race or ethnicity.

The cultures, to which we belong or associate with, shape us as people and impacts on our behaviour, attitudes and values. Each person’s culture has its own beliefs, behaviours and, often, language. It is important that the care you provide as a support worker shows an understanding and respect for each person’s cultural needs. ‘Ensure you honour each person’s individuality and expression of their own cultural values.’
Mental Needs

Mental needs are often defined as cognitive or intellectual needs. This involves the mental processes of the brain, for example, memory, problem solving, understanding and reasoning. Communication is also another important aspect of this process. When a person has their mental needs met, there is a positive effect on the person’s overall mental wellness. A stimulated brain generates chemicals and hormones in the brain that produce positive emotions. Positive emotions are thought to broaden creative thoughts and promote active behaviour. In other words a person’s moods, behaviours, temperament, and outlook on life can be significantly improved if their minds are mentally stimulated and actively engaged. Meeting the mental or cognitive needs of a person demonstrates your respect for their ability to think, despite their age, condition or disability. It promotes a belief in the ability of the person to participate in the planning of their own lives and allows them to have a sense of control.
Reflect on the following statements and determine what need (emotional, physical, social, cultural, spiritual, or mental) is being expressed. Remember there may be an overlap of needs and more than one need could be addressed.

Identify whether the need has been met or unmet.

Agnes has coeliac disease and the staff are not sure what foods have gluten in them, so often Agnes complains of a stomach ache.

Mary has dementia and keeps asking for her ‘baby’. Staff members give Mary a doll to cuddle when she is agitated.

James has just arrived as a short-term care resident. The family have been reassured that James will be able to say his own prayer (karakia) before dinner each night.

Sam loves movies and is constantly chatting about the latest releases. His support worker makes sure she reads up on what is on at the cinema, so she can chat about these movies with Sam.

Eileen is losing her eyesight which is distressing her as personal appearance is something she has been proud of. She has difficulty doing her own hair and makeup and is not joining in activities like she used to as she worries about how she looks.
Abe was a jazz singer in a band and loves nothing more than sitting listening to some of his old music. A support worker has downloaded music to a music player and he is happy to sit with his headphones on late into the evening when others have gone to bed.

Bernice has just joined a group of mah-jong players on Tuesday afternoons. She is enjoying meeting new people and enjoys the mental stimulation of the game as well.

Now consider some of the scenarios above where there are unmet needs ad describe what you could do to ensure that person’s needs are met.

Agnes:

Eileen:
Integration of holistic needs

It is always important to see the framework of holistic needs as interconnecting. You, for example, are supporting a person’s spiritual needs by assisting them to the lounge for the weekly tai chi session and dressed appropriately to participate. In doing this you are also supporting their emotional and social needs (interaction with others and inner peace and calmness), their mental needs (engaging their mind in the technique of the moves) and physical health is optimised by simply participating in the activity.

Stages of the lifespan associated with needs

There is an assumption that the needs of people in care settings will remain constant. However needs can alter due to changes in age, health status, environment and personal circumstances. As we develop as human beings, we go through different stages in the lifespan from birth until old age. At each stage we all will have physical, social, emotional, cultural, mental and spiritual needs that have an impact on our health and wellbeing. The needs and life of an 80-year-old can be very different to that of an 8-year-old with a disability. Therefore, depending on the care setting you are working in, it is important to have an understanding of the unique needs at each stage of the lifespan. Remember there can be overlap of needs across stages of the lifespan and naturally relevant throughout, are the basic survival needs such as warmth, shelter, food, water, sleep, love and affection.
The emphasis here is on the stage of the lifespan and what some of the needs may be at each stage.

The needs listed encompass the physical, social, cultural, spiritual, emotional and mental dimensions of health and wellbeing.

**Early Childhood:** Attachment, bonding, security, love, affection, praise, stimulation, discipline, guidance, peers, sleep, play, toys, education, communication, stable and safe environment, limitations and boundaries, whanau, cultural recognition.

**School Age:** Play, positive encouragement, reinforcement of self-identity, family/whanau support, education, exercise, discipline, adventure, friends, love, affection, clubs, groups, spirituality, freedom, role models, opportunities for imagination, creativity, rewards, praise and opportunities to make mistakes.

**Adolescence:** Cultural recognition, praise, socialising opportunities, clubs, groups, boundaries, opportunities to take risks and make decisions and experiment, privacy, own space, music, support of self-identity, opportunities to explore spirituality, guidance, sex education, independence, goals, sport, ambitions, relationships – family/whanau, friends.

**Early Adulthood:** Development of intimate relationships, partners, mobility, security, experiences, education, religious commitments, cultural recognition and involvement, independence, goals, employment, career development, family/whanau, broadening of peer group, exploring sexuality, responsibilities, creation of own family and stability.

**Middle Adulthood:** Cultural Recognition, family/whanau, friends, security, financial independence, valued activities, employment, travel, taking on new challenges, exploring self-identity, education, stability, security, renewal of goals, exercise, rest and relaxation.

**The Elderly:** Cultural recognition, stimulation, family/whanau support, involvement, active participation, friends, clubs, medical support, hobbies, interests, rest, relaxation, valued activities, sense of belonging, comfort, spirituality, education, warm and safe environment and nourishing food.
Māori perspective of holistic needs

The Māori perspective of holistic needs can be explored through Dr Mason Durie’s (1982) model of health called ‘Te Whare Tapa Wha’. The wharenuiru (meeting house) is used to illustrate the dimensions of wellbeing. Just as each corner of a house must be balanced and strong to hold its structure, each component of health must be balanced for wellbeing to exist. Durie also believes that each component is intertwined with the other.

The four components (or pillars) are:
1. Te Taha Wairua – Spiritual Health
2. Te Taha Whanau – Family Health
3. Te Taha Hinengaro – Mental Health
4. Te Taha Tinana – Physical health

This perspective recognises that all four components need to be regarded when providing care for Māori in health and social care settings. If there is an inconsistency in these components or a component is deficient or neglected, it will reveal itself as stress or illness on the mind/body/relationships and levels of health and wellness will be compromised.

Using this model as a framework to meet the holistic needs of Māori, it is important to be familiar with the four components; the emphasis on these components, and your role as a support worker to recognise holistic needs from a culturally appropriate perspective.
Te taha wairua (spiritual)

Is acknowledged as the most essential requirement to maintain and achieve optimal health. Without spiritual awareness, a person may lack wellbeing and be more prone to ill health. The spiritual wellbeing of a person is not just about religion (though very important to some) but is also about relationships with the environment, between people or with heritage.

Te taha whanau (family)

Whanau is recognised as the foundation of Māori society. Te taha whanau refers to family wellbeing. Whanau is about extended relationships, sometimes including three to four generations. Maintaining family relationships is critical to wellbeing. Everyone has a place and a role to fulfil within their own whanau which gives each person young and old a sense of identity. Involvement of family should be recognised as central to meeting the needs of Māori and maximising their health and wellbeing.

Te taha hinengaro (mental)

This component refers to emotions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. The belief is that the mind and body are inseparable - if someone is unhappy or discouraged from expressing their emotions, this will manifest itself in their physical health. Communication through emotions, gestures and signals are more meaningful than words and valued as such. It is not uncommon for Māori to show how they feel rather than talk about their feelings. Being sensitive to a person’s emotions, will promote their wellbeing.

Te taha tinana (physical)

This component focuses on the physical wellbeing and bodily care of a person. Physical health is intertwined with spiritual, emotional and family wellbeing. ‘The body is the physical container of the self, but it is more; for it is also a fundamental aspect or dimension of self’. Supporting a person’s physical needs, will also support the spiritual being, emotional state and whanau involvement which will optimise the overall wellness of a person.

More info

To read about other Māori models of health - visit:

www.hauora.co.nz/Māori health
www.health.govt/Māori health models
Supporting holistic needs from a Māori perspective

Acknowledge the important role whanau has in a person’s life. Māori will see it as their responsibility and obligation to be involved in their whanau member’s care and will want to be involved in decisions being made. Not only does whanau contribute to overall wellbeing, they are also a source of identity and security for the person. It is important to:

- Be aware of Māori belief systems, including views on a person’s mana, death and dying, importance of family, prayer (karakia), and traditional healing practices and communication styles.
- Recognise that there is a strong belief that being connected to the past is important for now and in the future. The importance of ancestors and generations needs to be recognised in terms of the person’s self-identity.
- Understand the emphasis that Māori place on the relationship between spirituality and wellness.
- Understand key Māori concepts and values that need to be respected in a health and social care setting.

(Refer to your cultural safety workbook for more detail on concepts and values)

Other Cultures

Just as it is important to acknowledge the Māori perspective on holistic needs, it is also important to consider the perspective of holistic health and wellbeing from other cultures.
Within the health or social care setting you work in, identify evidence that demonstrates respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of the people being supported and family/whanau.
Unmet needs

Having unmet needs is associated with a variety of negative consequences that can affect the health and wellbeing of the person. Other health conditions may go unnoticed if rapport with the person you are supporting has not been developed.

If a person feels they are not involved in their care, that is, they feel a lack of control within environment, there may be decline in their functional skills. They may feel powerless over their situation and indifferent if they believe the tasks they do are not validated or recognised. A lack of praise and positive reinforcement can result in person questioning their own ability.

Studies have shown that there is a correlation between unmet physical needs and an increased use of health services, including more frequent visits to hospitals and general practitioner visits. This suggests that overall health and wellbeing is compromised when person’s physical needs are not addressed.

There is additional data that suggests where daily living needs (basic needs) are not met; there is an effect on the mental state of the person such as:

- low mood.
- increased anxiety.
- agitation.
- depression.

Social isolation is often an outcome of needs not being met. As a person becomes more socially isolated, there is a direct correlation in a decline in their overall health and wellbeing. This has been particularly noted for elderly people who live on their own.

Where emotional needs are unmet, there is a risk the person will have a lack of understanding or appreciate the feelings of others.

A person who does not have their needs met may show signs of anxiety and agitation. Challenging behaviours are often viewed as a product of an unmet need. The person acts out in an attempt to get the need met or alternatively their behaviour may be an expression of frustration that need is unmet. Research suggests that a need typically underlies a challenging behaviour. For example, a lack of social contact, inactivity, physical pain or discomfort.
Meeting needs

Meeting physical needs

Know the person well; read their care plan and life story and become familiar with their history, family, hobbies, interests and goals. It is important to:

- Encourage person to be actively involved in their personal cares. For example, a person may have difficulty cleaning their teeth, but can put the toothpaste on the brush.

- Be very familiar with the person’s strengths, what they are capable of, and which areas most need support. It cannot be assumed that they want help all the time. Ask and listen to their requests.

- Discuss your care activities with the person for whom you are providing support. For example, “Hi Mrs Brady, I am here to assist you with taking a shower.” This demonstrates respect for the person you are supporting and confirms what you task you are doing.

- Encourage movement by providing opportunities for exercise and walks whenever possible.

- Regularly check their sensory aids are working such as a battery in a hearing aid, clean glasses that have the correct prescription.

- Set up environment to person likes and tastes such as, the radio on the station they enjoy.

- Use pictures/photos on wall, trinkets in room to engage in discussion with the person.

- Where mobility is limited ensure the person is seated comfortably. Ask person how they are feeling.

- Be aware of other indicators of distress, for example, something bothering the person may not be physical, but could be spiritual or emotional.

- Ensure lighting and temperature of room is sufficient to needs of person. Remember a person who is immobile or sitting in a wheelchair will feel the cold more than you do.

- Observe and report any changes in a person’s health status or condition immediately.
Meeting emotional needs

Getting to know an individual and understanding personal circumstances will help in assessing emotional needs. It is important to:

• Identify a person’s strengths and focus on this will support a person’s feelings of self-worth.

• Observe person’s actions, reactions, behaviours, moods and body language. This can often be a good gauge of how they are actually feeling.

• Be attentive could be considered a form of nutrition that feeds the emotional part of the brain. This promotes feelings of safety and security and makes the individual feel more valued.

• Give the person a sense of autonomy by allowing them to make decisions and choices and support them to do this. This will lessen their feeling of helplessness.

• Validate a person’s feelings by acknowledging their concerns, for example, if a person says they are feeling sad, recognise this by responding; “I am sorry you are feeling sad today, is there anything I can do to help you feel better?”

• Allow person a sense of status by showing respect for their skills, strengths, personal experiences. Reinforce how enriching it is to learn from them.

• Give the person a meaning and purpose by involving them in daily tasks, ask their opinion and ensuring there is stimulation in their day.

• Ensure the person feels safe in their environment (physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually and culturally).

• Encourage the person to stay connected to others family, whanau and friends. Help them to do this by encouraging and reminding them to phone regularly. If possible you could even show them how to use a computer to email or skype.

• Stimulate their senses by play music person enjoys or arrange a massage or facial, or spend time outside with them where they can be in touch with nature. This has been shown to invoke positive emotions.
Meeting social needs

Assist a person to maintain contact with family/friends through different forms of communication and social media. You, as a support worker, can do this by:

- encouraging family and friends to visit.
- using photos, books, music to reinforce the connection to happy events and social gatherings in which they have been involved.
- helping a person, that has a particular interest, for example, gardening.
- encouraging individuals, in residential settings, to participate in recreational and leisure activities including outings.
- encouraging a person to continue with their hobbies, as this can boost self-worth and ensure feelings of accomplishment and purpose.
- belonging to community groups or clubs can form structure to a person’s life, which can be vital to their sense of belonging and inclusion.
Read through the case study, and then answer the questions below.

**Case study: Meeting the social needs of a person with a brain injury:**

Before Michael’s sustained a brain injury, he was actively involved in the community belonging to many clubs and committees. Though it is now difficult without his licence, Michael is still able to do some of the activities he used to love. Every month he is transported to the Lions club he has belonged to for twenty years. He no longer plays bowls but enjoys going down to the club once a week to watch a game and share a drink with his friends. When he gets bored at home, he loves nothing more than going off on his scooter to the local shopping centre to chat with the people in the chemist, bank and bookshop.

How are Michael’s social needs being met?
Meeting cultural needs

Meeting the cultural needs of each person for whom you provide support is crucial for the overall health and wellbeing of the person. You can meet needs by:

- extending your understanding of different cultures.
- finding out about any traditions, customs or important values that relate to the person’s culture.
- being aware and respectful of special words and/or expressions that may be used by the person’s specific culture.
- understanding that non-verbal communication can be different in different cultures.
- remembering that every person has a view of their own culture, so you should check with them to find out what you need to do.
- asking family or seeking advice from someone who is knowledgeable and experienced in that culture if they are not able to tell.
- gaining a little amount of knowledge of different cultures can make a big difference to your relationship with the person you support.
Read the two case studies below and consider the cultural needs of each.

**Case study: Meeting the cultural needs of people:**

**Case Study 1:**

Lucas Peri is a young Māori boy who has muscular dystrophy and is confined to a wheelchair. He lives with his mother and extended whanau and only uses a respite service a couple of times year. Support workers from a homecare agency attend to his personal needs during the weekdays. Lucas attended Kohanga Reo until he was six years old and is now in an immersion class at the local school. He enjoys speaking te reo at home with his Koro, who is the only other person in the house who is fluent. He enjoys learning traditional Māori customs like flax weaving, which has also been a useful therapy for his hands. Lucas also loves helping out when a hangi is laid for a family celebration several times a year. He has recently joined a local community kapa haka group with his older cousin.

As discussed earlier, a person can exist within more than one culture. What are two cultures that Lucas may identify with?

As a support worker going into the family home three times a week, what are two things you could do that demonstrates respect for the cultures with which Luke identifies.
Case Study 2:

Billy is a young outgoing boy with cerebral palsy, who is an avid fan of football. Any opportunity given, he will talk about his favourite team Manchester United. Family life at home had always revolved around football, as his father was in the premier league in England before they immigrated to New Zealand three years ago.

Billy scans the newspaper every day for the FA and European cup results, and tries to watch some games on television. This is often difficult, as no one else in the home in which he now lives, enjoys football so he is does get out voted. One of his goals for the year is to attend at least one Phoenix home game. A support worker, who also enjoys football, has managed to get a poster of Manchester United to put on Billy’s wall. He chats with Billy about football when he is working with him and has offered to support Billy to attend a Phoenix game. Billy finds it most annoying when other staff refers to his beloved game as soccer and is quick to correct them when they make this mistake!

What are the identifiable aspects of Billy’s culture?

How are Billy’s cultural needs being met

Can you identify any unmet needs?
Meeting mental needs

Engaging the person, you support, in meaningful conversations, encourages the person to use, practice and exercise certain mental processes.

Talking with them about their ‘life story’ challenges them to use their long-term memory and communication skills. Memories represent active reconstructions of past events, even if the person has limited verbal skills, you can engage with them by using simple clear sentences that they can respond to through gestures, signs, or other forms of nonverbal communication skills.

Alternatively, using alternative forms of communication, in the form of aids, including photos, books, games, and music, can stimulate the mind and promote brain activity.

Giving the person something to do that gives them a sense of accomplishment and competence.

Encouraging the person to make decisions, such as, what clothes they would like to wear, when they would like their shower and what activities they would like to participate in. The support decisions that you are making demonstrates to them that you value their ability to think for themselves and be involved in their care.
Read through the case study, and then answer the questions below.

**Case study: Meeting the mental needs of a person:**

Every Wednesday, a lady from the med lab would arrive to take a sample of Molly’s blood. This visit always coincided with the visit from a volunteer who would run an activity on the television programme *Who wants to be a millionaire*. Molly, who used to be a high court judge, prides herself on keeping her mind active with crosswords, Sudoku and card games. Every week she would be agitated and cross that she had to wait in her room for the med lab lady, before being assisted to the lounge, partway through the activity. She has on numerous occasions asked if the blood test could be done on a different day of the week, but was told it is too difficult as the med lab has set... Read through the case study, and then answer the questions below.

What needs of Molly’s have not been met?

Please provide more ideas about meeting Molly’s needs.
Meeting spiritual needs

Being aware of your own feelings about spirituality so you can recognise and respond to spiritual needs of the person you support, without being judgemental.

Being pro-active and learning about the person’s spirituality could not only benefit the person you are supporting, but you will also feel empowered by having the knowledge to support the person’s spiritual belief.

Engaging with a person about their spiritual beliefs could provide a good way to show the person that you are interested in their spiritual needs.

Providing alternate forms of spiritual support, such as music can be used as a tool to reach a person’s spiritual needs. Music can sometimes evoke memories and emotions that are confirmation for the person of their self.

Acknowledging that a person may like some quiet time and space and privacy to practice their spiritual beliefs can be great way to help balance the person’s mental and emotional health. It is important to set up an environment for the person to be supported in this function. For example Rita requests the night staff leave her rosary beads next to bed on her side table where she can reach them.
Read through the case study, and then answer the questions below.

**Case study: Meeting the spiritual needs of a person:**

Four times a week, I go into an elderly woman’s home to assist her with her personal cares. Cecily is very independent, is determined to continue living in the home she has lived in for 55 years. Cecily is a very spiritual woman and I will often find her in a state of meditation when I arrive at her house. I never interrupt her, and go about doing household chores, until she calls out to me. Cecily rarely goes out nowadays, as she is still adjusting to not having her licence and is not familiar with the public transport system.

Recently, while I was assisting Cecily with her personal cares, she told me a story about how she had been a founding member of the local Tai Chi club at the grand age of 75! I could sense from her gestures and facial expressions and a note of wistfulness in her voice, that she really missed her weekly tai chi sessions. On my next visit (after I had sought permission from our home coordinator), I asked her if she would like me to make enquiries about the tai chi club and see if she could continue attending. Her eyes lit up and she said she would love it if it could be arranged. One phone call later, we found out that there is now a class, three days a week for people in their aging years. With a little organising (of transport), Cecily went off to her first class last month and has gone every week since. She loves it (though admits to having little sit downs through the class!), and has gained a whole new social circle of friends as a result. It is great that now one of the members have offered to pick up Cecily so she does not need to pay for a taxi. By helping Cecily achieve this, I also have a sense of accomplishment – just knowing that from my actions, Cecily’s life is just that much better.

Having read the story about Cecily, think about how her current needs are being met. Give an example for each:

**Physical.**

**Emotional.**

**Social.**

**Spiritual.**

**Mental.**
Reflect

Now reflect on your own role. Is there something you have done for a person you support that has had a significant impact on their health and wellbeing?
Who may be involved in meeting holistic needs?

As support workers, you cannot expect to meet all the needs of the people you support. To meet a person’s needs holistically, there needs to be a partnership with other people or services. We call this a ‘team approach.’ Some may have specific roles, such as doctors, specialists, physiotherapists or occupational therapists, while others may be connected to the person through emotional, cultural or spiritual ties and may have a role in meeting some of these needs.
Role of Family/Whanau

Relationships are at the core of health and wellbeing. The role of family/whanau is pivotal in the meeting of emotional and social needs of a person.

We, as support providers cannot assume that a person’s family is the traditional western nuclear family. It is important to have a broad perspective of what defines a family.

Family also means different things to different cultures, so it is important to recognise how the person identifies with their family. Always remember family can guide you in meeting the person’s needs, as they often do know their family member best. This is particularly important in situations where the person is unable to advocate for themselves. Family involvement has shown to decrease loneliness and depression and increase quality of life.

Developing relationships with family/whanau

Involving family, whanau and friends in the care of a person, can provide enormous benefits for both the person for whom you are caring for and for you as the support worker.

There are many aspects of a person’s needs that you may have limited knowledge on, or is outside your scope or role as a support worker. By fostering a relationship with family, you are demonstrating a belief that family is an integral part of person’s life and wellbeing and you value their input.

Some ways you can facilitate family involvement is to:

- ensure you are very familiar with the person’s care plan. Often family have been involved/instrumental in the development of this plan.
- be welcoming when family/whanau visit through your verbal and non-verbal communication, that is, by giving a warm greeting, smile, and respecting their need for privacy with their family member.

More info

A useful definition of family is ‘those closest to the person in knowledge, care and affection. This includes the biological family, the family of acquisition (related by marriage, civil and de facto or adoption) and the family of choice and friends’.
• encourage families of people from diverse backgrounds to share information to enable culturally appropriate care. Perhaps they could bring in recipes of the person’s favourite dish that can be passed onto to the kitchen.

• learn about the person’s background and interests by asking family. Sometimes care plans have limited information and having this expanded by the family can give you, the support worker, the information that may assist how you meet the needs of the person.

• be aware of days that hold particular significance for the person. This may be birthdays, cultural celebrations, or an anniversary of someone who has died.

• Involve family in activities and events.

• If person is in a residential setting, encourage family to bring in personal items that are familiar to their family member, such as cushions, photos, and books.

• ask family for ideas if you are having difficulty with something. If they have been involved in the person’s care in the past, they may have developed useful strategies for this type of situation.

It is important to recognise that some families may find it difficult to provide the support they would like due to their own circumstances.

Reflect on what family means to you.

Consider a person you support and think about how they identify with family?
Role of care manager/facility manager

The role of the person who manages the facility or service is to ensure you are familiar and confident in working from a person-centred approach that focuses on the holistic needs of each person you support.

To create this culture of care in the workplace, managers need to:

• enable you to attend training specific to this model of care and support.
• ensure care plans are specific to the needs of each person and these are detailed plans of action to guide you in meeting holistic needs. These plans need to be reviewed regularly and you and the family kept up-to-date with any changes.
• introduce tools to gather a detailed and relevant history of a person. This is valuable information that you can use in building relationships with the person and their family. For example; life story books can consist of written accounts of person’s life experiences, photographs and other materials that relates to the life of the person. It can provide a holistic view of a person. The manager also has the role of ensuring that support workers and family/whanau are kept up-to-date on changing needs of a person.
• actively involve family, whanau and others in the care and support of people in their care.

Health professionals

Most health professionals nowadays work from a team approach which has its foundations in holistic care. Though their targeted focus is to improve the physical wellbeing of the person, health care professionals are encouraged to consider the whole person in their interactions with the person. For example, exploring the spiritual beliefs of their patients has shown to improve the relationship with the person and increase their understanding of the interactions of the beliefs on the person’s health.

Therapists

A range of therapists may be involved in meeting the holistic needs of a person in a health or social care setting.

A physiotherapist or occupational therapist can assist in meeting physical needs such as providing exercises to maintain or enhance mobility, or providing aids and devices to assist in maintaining independence and functional skills. This can also have a positive impact on the person’s emotional wellbeing. A therapist can also advise you how you could help to meet some of these needs.
Counsellors or psychologists may also be asked to meet a person’s emotional needs through therapy sessions, guidance on relaxation and meditation or cognitive behaviour therapy. Such support can have significant benefits on physical health as well.

**Friends/advocates/community groups**

Sometimes people rely on friends and others as their main support network if they have no family or their family do not live close by. This support network can provide a sense of attachment, belonging and security. These are people who can be turned to in times of stress or need of comfort.

Negotiating the health care environment can be daunting for anyone, especially the elderly. It can be overwhelming for a person who has to make decisions or access other health services. The availability of someone from the person’s support group, a known and trusted individual, can be of great assistance to the person in meeting both physical and medical needs and emotional needs.

Community groups provide support through reinforcement of beneficial routines for people. Weekly outings provide an ongoing opportunity for social support and interaction. This further reinforces a sense of belonging and self-identity, which supports all dimensions of a person’s wellbeing.

**Other support workers**

All support workers need to work from a person-centred framework that recognises that each person is unique with physical, emotional, spiritual, social and mental needs. This will ensure consistency of care and an understanding that addressing holistic needs will optimise a person’s overall health and wellbeing.

Work as a team and ensure that at handover relevant and useful information is discussed. Remember all information that is communicated is confidential and must not be discussed where other people may overhear.
Your role

There is an expectation that as a support worker, you will develop an attitude of consciousness of holistic care, that is, being mindful and intent on caring for the person’s body, mind, spirit and emotions and addressing their individual needs.

Your role is to:

- follow a person-centred approach by finding out about the person’s life story and ensure they are at the centre of care, decisions and planning.
- gain an understanding of what holistic needs are and the interplay of the dimensions, whether physical, spiritual, social, cultural, mental, and emotional, or a combination of these needs, that make up the ‘whole’ person and the impact this has on the overall health and wellbeing of a person.
- listen, as support workers, to people talk about their life experiences and emotions and believe that you learn something from these encounters which helps them to really understand the person the person for whom you are caring.
- partner with the person you support to optimise their health and wellbeing.
- use effective communication skills by tailoring communication to the needs of a person. If necessary use aids, like whiteboards, photos, and pictures to facilitate this communication.
- develop meaningful relationships with the person, their family, whanau and significant others. Time is the main ingredient to form and sustain relationships.
- Encourage and promote independence by encouraging a person to be involved in their care.
- Demonstrate respect by supporting the individual according to their needs, within the personal plan guidelines and within our own abilities, and not as what is convenient to us as a support worker.

The key points to remember are:

- needs vary from individual to individual.
- needs encompass social, spiritual, emotional, physical, mental and cultural.
- needs can vary through different stages of the lifespan.
- needs vary from culture to culture.
- individual health and wellbeing is reflective of how needs are met.