

Organizational Health & The Medicine Wheel

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While summer may mean vacations, sandy beaches and fireworks, it's actually an ideal time for a quick organizational health check. This can be as simple as a few hours of facilitated discussion. We achieve great results using a simple four-step process. The results of which easily flow into your performance management system. This process increases participation, addresses conflicts, improves brainstorming and critical thinking. Best of all, it doesn't require expensive software or a business degree!

The Medicine Wheel, a symbol deeply rooted in Indigenous cultures, offers a holistic approach to understanding and balancing various aspects of life. When applied to the realm of leadership, the wheel becomes a powerful tool for guiding organizations toward more sustainable and inclusive outcomes. Its four parts—Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual—can be used as a framework for holistic decision-making and continuous improvement.

Physical: This aspect relates to systems, processes, and structures that drive operational efficiency and quality. In research, it calls for robust data collection and analysis, ensuring that performance improvement efforts are based on facts and measurable results. We like to start the discussion with the question, "What is working?" This helps us identify a few strengths.

Emotional: This underscores the human aspect of healthcare, emphasizing empathy, patient-centered care, and team dynamics. In planning and leadership, this element advocates for creating environments where both staff and patients feel heard, supported, and valued. Effective leadership must cultivate trust, emotional resilience, and soft skills. The more sensitive question now is, "what's NOT working?"

Mental: This part emphasizes strategic thinking, problem-solving, and innovation. In research and performance improvement, it promotes critical thinking and the continuous assessment of current practices. Leaders must foster a culture of learning and adaptability, enabling their teams to overcome challenges and embrace new approaches. The question, "What did we LEARN?" improves critical thinking and prioritization.

Spiritual: The spiritual component invites reflection on the organization's core values and mission. It highlights the importance of aligning healthcare practices with broader ethical principles, such as equity, compassion, and integrity. For leadership, this requires inspiring deep connection to the organization's purpose and contribution to the greater good. And so finally, "what NEW ideas, systems, processes should we consider?"

Summary: The Medicine Wheel can improve commitment and results on your next project, quarter and year. Rather than simply asking, "how do we improve", this process systematically improves planning, critical thinking, and organizational development. Now is the perfect time to help your people reflect and prepare to revitalize your organization. Review the vision and mission. Reduce confusion and conflict. Refresh and reconnect your people's sense of purpose.

As a healthcare leader, are you integrating all four parts of the Medicine Wheel into your planning and performance improvement strategies? How can a holistic approach transform your organization's outcomes - both clinically *and* culturally? What are the missed opportunities when one part of the wheel is neglected in leadership decisions? Let's discuss how to embed these principles into your organization's strategy for lasting impact.

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