

# Planning for the COVID Marathon

*Hope for the best - Plan for the rest.*

**W**e started this race unsure of how far away the finish line was. Today, we understand that this is no sprint; this is a marathon like nothing we've ever known. In some ways, we were fortunate that we got to run the first leg of the COVID marathon in the comfort of summertime. Now we must take what we've learned and use it to make plans for the next leg of the race, the one that will be run in the cold and damp, in the snow and ice.

First, it's a good idea to take inventory of both our needs and our resources. The "Wellness Wheel" on the back of this page can help you do that. For each dimension, circle the number that represents how "full" that part of your life feels: One would be "running on empty" and 10 would be "a full tank." Then connect the dots by tracing the curve from one number to the next and look at it as a whole. How balanced is the wheel of your life? How smoothly can you roll from day to day? What areas are causing a rough ride and could use some filling in?

Once you've determined which areas you'd like to focus on:

- Think about places, people, and strengths that are already resources for you. What ways can you expand their impact?
- Consider the bounds of your current situation (available time, money...) and brainstorm ways to find new supports if you need them. If you'd like some help, the Cook County Community Support Line volunteers can help you talk through this process. You can reach them at [218-877-7071](tel:218-877-7071).

- Look for **small** ways to fill up the segments of your wheel. You don't have to fill up all at once. Ask yourself, "What's the smallest, easiest thing that I could do that would make a noticeable improvement in this area?" It's fine to move up one number at a time (or even just a fraction at a time!).

In addition to examining our plans through the filters of "Available Money and Time," COVID-19 requires us to run our planning through an extra filter called "Harm Reduction." Harm reduction is a public health approach that first emerged in the 1990s during the AIDS crisis. It emphasizes reducing the negative consequences of potentially risky activities. It expands our evaluation of COVID risk from a binary of either "hide at home" or "business as usual" approaches and instead asks us to think about a continuum of "high risk - safer - safest" choices.

Harm reduction is about providing people the knowledge they need to make informed choices about ways they can protect their own health, and the health of others, without making survival contingent on perpetually perfect behavior.

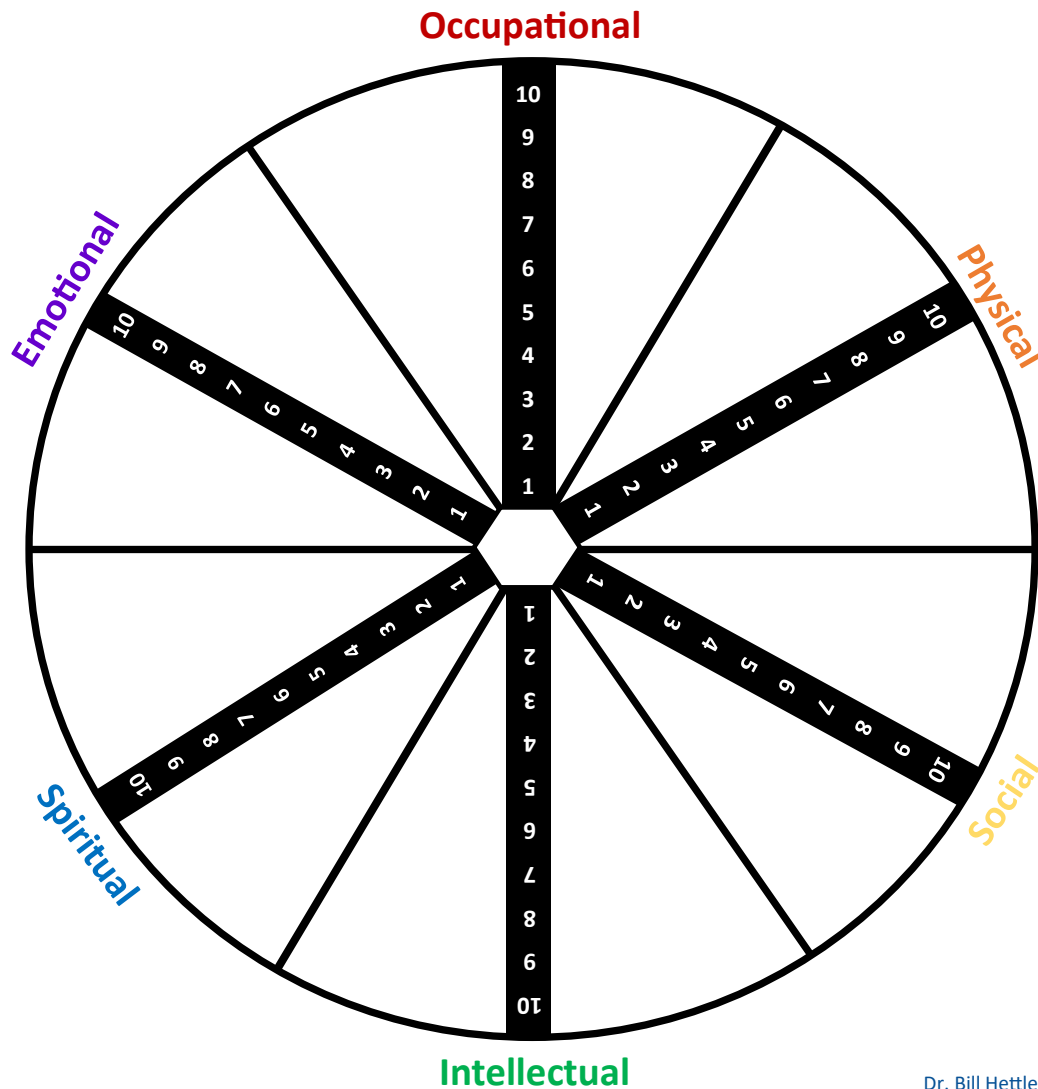
You can apply the ideas of harm reduction to your COVID marathon planning. Just round out your "Wellness Wheel" and build your race strategies around a few simple guidelines:

- Socialize with only a small number of people. This means a limited number in total, not just a few people at any one time.
- Wear a mask when you're around people you don't live with.
- Any get-together that can be outside, should be outside.



**TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES CAN TAKE A LOT OF SUPPORT. WE'RE HERE TO HELP!  
ASK A NURSE OR PROVIDER IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK.**

# Wellness Wheel



Dr. Bill Hettler, National Wellness Institute

Now that you've gotten your Wellness Wheel lined out, how about getting your small changes lined up? Here are some questions to help your hone in on taking those small steps that can make a big difference during the rest of your COVID marathon!

## What can you do to take good care of your physical health?

- Make appointments for the annual physical & dental check-up that you skipped.
- Find a comfortable face mask, works well, and is easy to keep clean.
- How can you build more movement into your life?
- Get a flu shot.
- Add one more serving of veggies/fruit to your day.
- What else?

## How can you shore up your mental/spiritual /emotional health?

- Find a remote counselor, support or prayer group, or our community support line.
- Research and plan ways to say "no" to requests.
- Fix 1 thing that is a small, on-going, source of irritation.
- Practice mindful breathing, eating, walking, or....?
- What else?

## What can you do when you get bored (not social media)?

- Get a library card and choose a book for pure fun.
- Never played video games? Visit [Steam](https://www.steam.com) to try one!
- Always play video games? Try a board or card game!
- Clean out a closet and sell stuff on eBay.

## If you're working from home, what would make that better?

- Rig up or purchase a standing desk.
- Rearrange so you can be better organized or near a window.
- Getting a full-spectrum "happy light".
- Prepping breakfast/lunch the night before.
- What else would help?

## How can you get your social needs met?

- Is there someone you've thought you'd enjoy getting to know, but you just never got together? Reach out!
- Can you restart lapsed family/friend video chats?
- Host a virtual meet-up to discuss... Ice Fishing? Tiger King? Dune? Red Dead Redemption? What topics would you enjoy chatting about? Others will too!

## What do you need to make getting outside easier this winter?

- Grippers for your boots?
- Heavy-duty mittens?
- Long underwear?
- Insulated pants?
- Wool socks?