

THE MODEL FOR HEALTHY LIVING for CLERGY

Self-assessment, Reflection, and Goals

Beloved I pray that all may go well with
you and that you may be in good
health, just as it is well with your soul.

—3 John 2



The Model for Healthy Living for Clergy reflects that true wellness is not just about your body but also about the interconnectedness of body and spirit in the ways that you live. This custom introduction to the Model for Healthy Living recognizes the particular challenges of balancing seven key dimensions of life while fulfilling a call to professional ministry. The tool gives clergy the opportunity to pause and assess wellness against the backdrop of vocation and reflect on ways to support a healthy life to continue answering God’s call to a healthy ministry.

- 1. Begin with a quick self-assessment** using the Model for Healthy Living wheel. Evaluate each of the seven areas of your life, keeping in mind that no one area is more important to balanced living than any other. Circle the numbers on the Model to indicate how satisfied you are that each area is in balanced with the rest of your life. 1= least satisfied and 10 = most satisfied.
- 2. Move through each of the seven sections** separately, using the Thought Starters, Reflection Starters, Action Starters, and Goal Starter to decide the next step that makes the best sense for your life in each area.
- 3. Return to the Model for Healthy Living** wheel in three months or six months. Can you see progress? Is it time for new goals?



FAITH LIFE

Building a relationship with God, your neighbors, and yourself

For clergy, a particular challenge is sustaining a faith life that is separate from the role of being a professional faith leader. Faith traditions vary widely, but at the core, a faith life helps us build a relationship with God, our neighbors, and ourselves. This affirms that we are body-and-spirit beings created and loved by God. We can explore a richer faith life and enjoy the benefits this experience will bring to overall wellness.

Thought Starters

- How have you experienced God’s healing in your life in the past?

- Write your own definition of *wellness* in the context of ministry.

Reflection Starters

- God formed humans from the dust of the ground and breathed into us the breath of life (Genesis 2:7).
- Embodiment is a gift and a calling (Psalm 139).
- As God’s chosen ones, we put on new clothes (Colossians 3:12–14).

Action Starters

- Look for an opportunity to be a worshipper rather than a worship leader outside your own congregation’s setting.
- Make a list of activities, resources, places, and people that feed your faith life.
- Find a setting that supports a regular reflective time.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *faith life* into better balance?



MEDICAL

Partnership with your health care provider to manage your medical care

Ministry is a high-stress profession, and poorly managed stress can lead to various preventable medical conditions. Doctors have education and experience, but we know ourselves better than any doctor ever will. When it comes to medical care, we bring something important to the conversation. We can build a partnership with a health care provider that lets us participate in managing our health care.

Thought Starters

- Identify three ways stress gets the best of you.
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- Identify three ways you handle stress in positive ways.
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Reflection Starters

- Jesus speaks about the spiritual via the physical (John 4:13–14).
- The peace of Christ rules in our hearts (Ephesians 2:14).
- Jesus brought a kingdom of shalom (Isaiah 9:6).

Action Starters

- Think of medical care as a tool for keeping you fit for fulfilling your call.
- Ask for help if you need it. Being in a helping profession doesn't mean you can't ask for help to reduce stress.
- Learn more about chronic conditions and what you can do to care for yourself.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *medical care* into better balance?



MOVEMENT

Discovering ways to enjoy physical activity

Movement seems to be the easiest thing for busy clergy to drop from a crowded schedule. But when we consider the ways the parts of the body are hinged and rotate and reach in every direction, it's easy to see that God means for us to move. It's part of how we celebrate our body-and-spirit connection to God. No matter what our physical activity level is now, we can discover ways to enjoy movement.

Thought Starters

- Name some ways you can add movement to your life to show how you feel about God.
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- How would you describe the connection between your body and your spirit?
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Reflection Starters

- The earliest pages of the Bible show God's movement—walking—in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8).
- David, the greatest king of Israel, danced before the Lord with all his might (2 Samuel 6:14).
- Biblical writers describe the life of faith in language of movement (Isaiah 40:31, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Philippians 2:6, Hebrews 12:1).

Action Starters

- Start with small changes in movement—a few extra steps or a few minutes experimenting with a new activity.
- Seek the support of your leadership team or pastor-parish committee.
- Try something you never tried before to discover whether it brings you joy.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *movement* into better balance?



WORK

Appreciating your skills, talents, and gifts

Most clergy have a sense of always being on call, and a sense of calling make it hard to close down work and do something else. We were made to work, and the value of work is intrinsic. We can appreciate the skills, talents, and gifts we bring to our work—or calling—situation and find meaning for our lives while still maintaining whole-life balance.

Thought Starters

- How can my attitude toward my ministry, and its place in the balanced life, be an experience of God's glory?
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- Reflect on why it's hard to set boundaries between your calling and personal health.
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Reflection Starters

- God rested from work on the seventh day (Genesis 2:3).
- The Lord is the one who rewards our work (Ruth 2:12).
- No one has to do everything. God gives different gifts to different people (Ephesians 4:11–12).

Action Starters

- Clarify expectations for yourself, your family, and the congregation.
- Set boundaries between ministries and family life.
- Discern an area of ministry that feeds your spirit and one that perhaps has become a chore.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *work* into better balance?



EMOTIONAL

Managing stress and understanding your feelings to better care for yourself

Self-care habits are difficult for clergy to form against the landscape of caring for so many others. It's easy to turn to unhealthy habits in response to stress, whether it's food, mindless television, excessive spending, alcohol, or something else. In the moment, we feel better, even though we know it's bad in the long term. Through understanding our feelings, it's possible to make changes to manage stress in healthier ways.

Thought Starters

- Reflect on a time when you turned toward better health. What resulted from that choice?
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- Name one thing you would like to be different in your emotional wellness a year from now.
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Reflection Starters

- God can withstand our "yelling" in distress (Psalm 13:1–2).
- Jesus offers rest to the weary (Matthew 11:28–30).
- In Jesus we have courage to face what life brings (John 16:33).

Action Starters

- Take one concrete step toward regular time off.
- List activities that are restorative for *you*.
- Identify one key change you may need to make in order to reduce ministry-related stress.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *emotional life* into better balance?



NUTRITION

Making smart food choices and developing healthy eating habits

Pastors often find themselves in situations where food choices feel limited, beyond their control, or full of relational traps. Yet good nutrition builds strong bodies that lead us to being whole people better connected to God. What we eat matters. Whatever our eating habits are now, we can increase our understanding of how food affects our overall well-being and preparedness for ministry.

Thought Starters

- How do you feel about the reasons for your eating habits?
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- What experiences have you had with forming new eating habits in the past?
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Reflection Starters

- The Bible offers imagery of land bursting with God's good gift of food (Psalm 65:9–13).
- Jesus offers food for healing purposes, showing how we should receive it (John 6:11, 33–35).
- Mealtime nurtures community as well as our bodies (Acts 2:46).

Action Starters

- Separate eating situations you can control easily from ones that are more difficult. Set a goal for how to move more to the “easy” column.
- Keep a food journal for a few days. When, why, and what are you eating? What would you like to change?
- Learn healthy portion sizes so when you are eating away from home you can apply them.

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *nutrition* into better balance?



FRIENDS & FAMILY

Giving and receiving support through relationships

On one side of the coin, a congregation seems like a built-in and immediate social circle. On the other, pastors need support and relationships that don't depend on this closed social structure. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit were the very first relationship. Even God exists in community. Coping with life is sometimes hard, but friends and family make it easier. Giving and receiving support through relationships contributes to our health and ultimately to an enduring ministry.

Thought Starters

- Who can you ask to be your community for support in a choice to turn toward health?
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- Find a way to say thank-you to one person who is significant in your life.
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Reflection Starters

- Two are better than one to hold each other up (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10).
- A friend loves at all time (Proverbs 17:17).
- If one member suffers, all suffer (1 Corinthians 12:24–26).

Action Starters

- Identify a person outside the church to seek a deeper relationship with.
- Identify an interest to pursue that is unconnected to the church.
- Assess the amount of time you spend nurturing relationships you value. Is it enough for your health and the health of people you care most about?

Goal Starter

What one goal would help bring your *friends & family* life into better balance?
