

# Health Mentors

Contributed by Allan Besselink, PT, Dip.MDT  
Tuesday, 17 April 2007  
Last Updated Friday, 29 February 2008

A "mentor" is defined as "a wise and trusted guide and advisor". Perhaps this sounds like a crazy idea - but if we have sports coaches and life coaches, what about health coaches? Or better yet, let's put the right slant on it - because, as they say, perception is everything - and call them health mentors. Is this not what we need in the world of health to foster competent self care?

Yes, there is a need for health "care" - and health care providers. That will always be the case. But examine the medical problems faced by our society today. Obesity. Heart disease. Diabetes. All are issues that would benefit significantly from a different approach to health. These are conditions that either have a significant "preventative" aspect or that benefit tremendously from straightforward education and lifestyle changes. They are also conditions that are putting a tremendous strain on the health care system - and that strain doesn't look to be getting better any time soon, especially with an aging populace.

We now have a higher level of knowledge, a better understanding of self-responsibility, and a much greater availability of technology and informational resources. Can these be put to use in a much more forward-thinking way to foster self-care?

I would suggest that the answer is "yes". And to this end, I propose the role of health mentor or coach.

The health mentor could be retained or accessed by an individual in their own self-care optimization strategies. Ultimately, we are responsible to nobody but ourselves - and though change may be difficult, it is incumbent upon the participant to pursue their own growth and development - intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. If self-care is inherently related to these issues, then we can make use of an advisor who is well-versed in these aspects, and can then make use of educational and learning technology to build an environment for not only effective learning but also optimal growth.

This takes the focus away from a system that "fixes" and puts it on a system that "guides and fosters growth". Though there may be a subtle difference, perceptually the differences are huge. And instead of being gurus and healers, we become mentors and coaches - assisting our mentees to be all that they can be. A good mentoring environment involves the willing participation of both parties - and in the end, both sides learn from the experience.

The information to make this happen exists now. The technology exists - now. And Smart Sport International will be on the leading edge of change - in our health system. Our goal is to change the way that the individual views their health - by bringing self-care strategies into the 21st century, both technologically and educationally. There's no better time than the present - for change to begin in earnest.

{mos\_smf\_discuss}