

# ★ WELCOA's News & Views

# Purpose- Driven...

Finding Purpose In Your  
Worksite Wellness Program

A WELCOA

Expert Interview with

**Dr. Victor J. Strecher**

on the importance of  
having a strong purpose  
in your wellness program



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# ★WELCOA's News & Views

## Purpose-Driven: Finding Purpose In Your Worksite Wellness Program

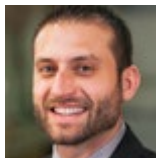
An Expert Interview with  
**Victor J. Strecher, PhD, MPH**

### ABOUT **VICTOR J. STRECHER, PHD, MPH**



Dr. Strecher received his PhD in Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Michigan School of Public Health in 1983. As Director for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship, Dr. Strecher is working in the UM School of Public Health and the University of Michigan to create an environment that promotes more direct dissemination of research efforts to improve the public's health nationally and globally. He is also Visiting Professor at the Peking University's School of Public Health. Dr. Strecher's book, *On Purpose: Lessons in Life and Health From the Frog, the Dung Beetle, and Julia*, is related to the importance of developing and maintaining a strong purpose in life.

### ABOUT **RYAN PICARELLA**



As WELCOA's new President, Ryan brings immense knowledge and insight from his career that spans over a decade in the health and wellness industry. He is a national speaker, healthcare consultant, and has designed and executed award winning wellness programs. Known for his innovative and pragmatic approach to worksite wellness, Ryan looks forward to furthering the WELCOA mission and vision and continuing to position the organization for success for the future.

Ryan Picarella can be reached at [rpicarella@welcoa.org](mailto:rpicarella@welcoa.org).

**It's** safe to say that most worksite wellness programs are not “purpose-driven.” To be sure, traditional programs have focused on health risk factors and metrics; they haven't tackled such nebulous topics like life's purpose and meaning. But solid research is indicating that wellness professionals may want to reconsider and incorporate this critical element into their programs.

In this part-two interview, WELCOA President Ryan Picarella asks Vic to reveal the current research, the application of concepts, future direction, and the tools and resources available when it comes to making worksite wellness programs “purpose-driven.”



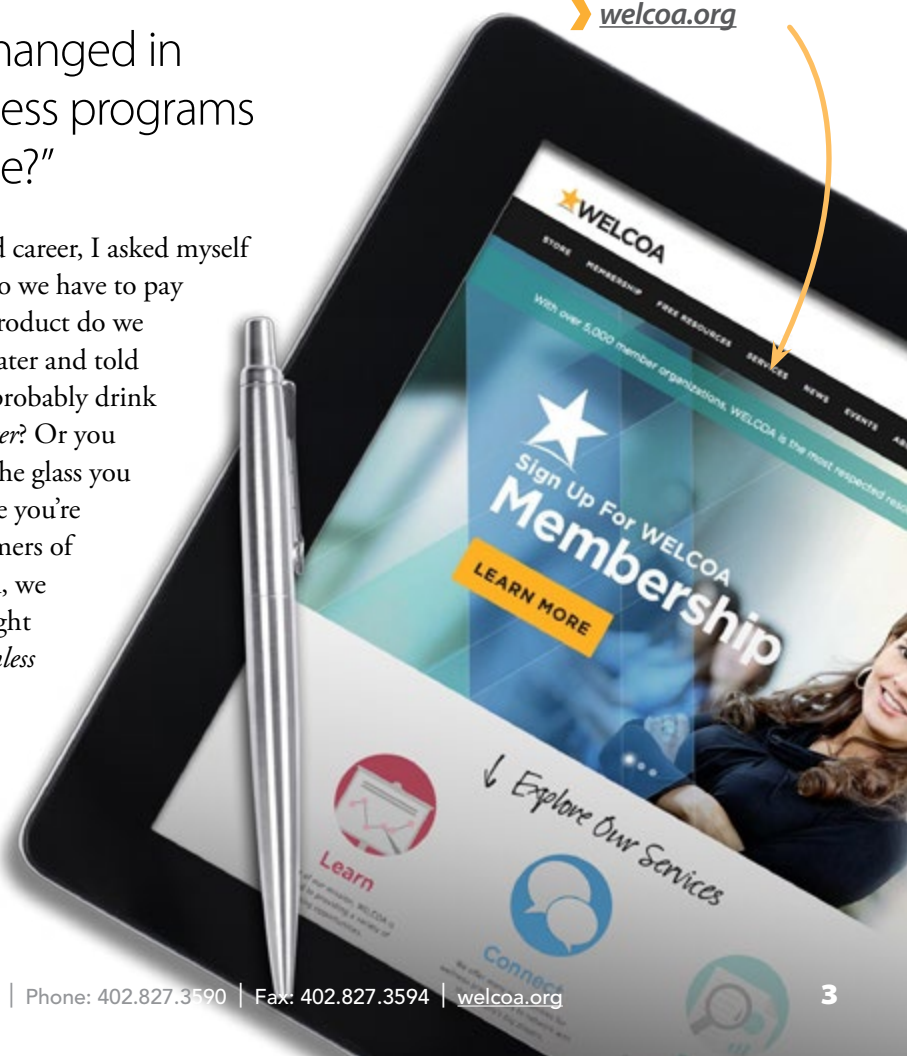
**Q1** How have your opinions changed in regards to traditional wellness programs with your new passion for “purpose?”

**Victor Strecher:** As I began a new direction in my life and career, I asked myself what I thought at the time was a simple question: “Why do we have to pay people to participate in wellness programs?” What other product do we need to pay people to take? What if I gave you a glass of water and told you “I'll pay you \$100 to drink this glass of water.” You'd probably drink it but you'd probably wonder what was *wrong with the water?* Or you may wonder if someone was collecting information from the glass you drank from. You'd probably expect to be paid the next time you're given a glass of water. This is what we found among customers of HealthMedia. When employees were paid to take an HRA, we saw higher participation but with lower enrollment in weight management, smoking cessation, and other programs—*unless they were paid.* I thought that this was creating a negative vortex and started thinking about different ways of increasing participation. Purpose is one of those ways.

“As I began a new direction in my life and career, I asked myself... ‘Why do we have to pay people to participate in wellness programs?’”

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## Q2 What role do you think “purpose” will/ does play in wellness and health promotion programs?

**VS:** I think purpose will play out at organizational and on individual levels. If we can find more organic ways of creating purpose in a workplace, namely through involving employees and visionary leadership, we should be able to generate greater engagement from employees through a shared purpose. Purpose-driven employees would then be offered wellness programming that gives them greater vitality in the form of energy, self-control, and ability to engage.

## Q3 How does “purpose” affect traditional risk factors such as blood pressure, diabetes, etc.?

**VS:** In two ways. First, creating a self-transcending purpose in life (a purpose bigger than yourself) will reduce defensiveness to change, creating greater interest in vitality-enhancing behaviors such as Sleep, Presence (mindfulness), Activity, Creativity, and Eating well (giving yourself “S.P.A.C.E.”). Each of these behaviors has been shown in randomized trials to enhance vitality (using the SF36 vitality sub-scale) and can serve as the basis for smoking cessation, weight, stress, anxiety, and depression management, injury prevention, and other disease prevention behaviors. Second, purpose in life has been shown in epidemiologic cohort studies to reduce the likelihood of subsequent disease.

## Q4 How can health promotion practitioners begin to incorporate the concept of purpose into their wellness programs?

**VS:** A simple incorporation of purpose might be to include purpose creation activities among employees and using purpose to motivate change. This could include the creation of a “purpose gallery” or identifying core values of employees that connect with values of the workplace. A more fundamental change would be the organic creation of a purpose by visionary leaders and employees of the workplace, followed by an entirely new approach to health risk assessments, focusing more on purpose in life and vitality rather than death and disease.

“...purpose in life has been shown in epidemiologic cohort studies to reduce the likelihood of subsequent disease.”



**Q5** Do you know of any organizations that have integrated purpose into their programming, if so how did they do it and what were the results?

**VS:** A large company that has combined a purpose organizational model with wellness is Humana. A smaller company that is extremely purpose-driven is Zingerman's (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/06/business/at-zingermans-pastrami-and-partnership-to-go.html>). It's a bit early to see large-scale results from these efforts but the components of this programming are strongly evidence-based.

**Q6** What tools are currently available for individuals to help define their purpose?

**VS:** My book, *On Purpose*, may be a start to at least get an idea of this concept. There is a free app connected with the book (*On Purpose* by Dungbeetle Press) available online ([www.dungbeetle.org](http://www.dungbeetle.org)) and through iTunes. That is the first step to this new approach to the health risk assessment. Thousands of people have used the app and we're starting to create a new version that will have many more features and functions.

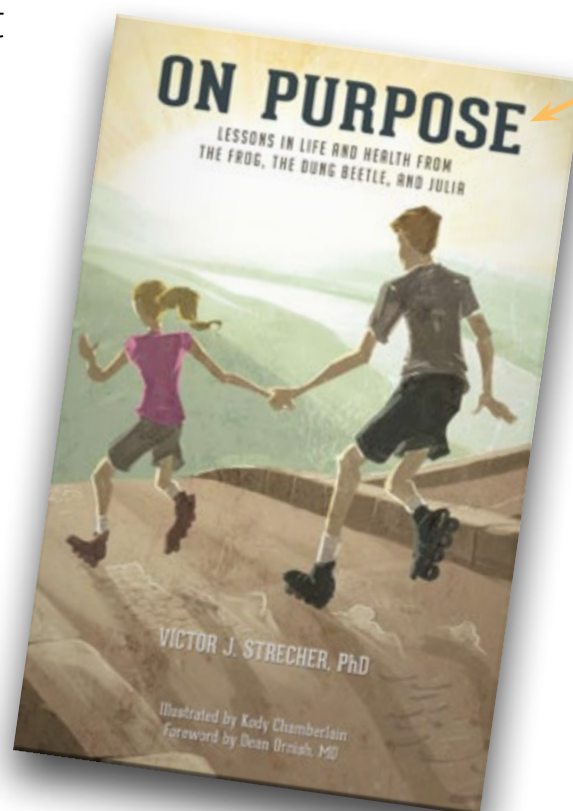
**Q7** If you had one final piece of advice for readers in regards to purpose what would it be?

**VS:** Start by practicing on yourself. Find your own purpose in your life and monitor the alignment between your daily living and your purpose in life. This alignment is what I would consider a truer measure of your well-being than disease, longevity, or even quality of life. After monitoring your own alignment, see if you concur. Consider the energy and self-control required to work toward this purpose and to address conflicts between multiple purposes (such as your work and your family). Monitor your S.P.A.C.E. behaviors (Sleep, Presence, Activity, Creativity, and Eating) and determine which one(s) influence your energy, self-control, and ability to engage. Consider whether enhancements in these S.P.A.C.E. behaviors provide greater energy, self-control, and engagement to modify other behaviors in your life, from substance abuse to relationships. If this approach works for you and makes sense, it will be more likely to work for and make sense to others. **N&V**

“Find your own purpose in your life and monitor the alignment between your daily living and your purpose in life.”

Check out Dr. Vic Strecher's book, *On Purpose: Lessons in Life and Health from the Frog, the Dung Beetle, and Julia*

Get it at Dr. Strecher's website: <http://www.dungbeetle.org/>



# THE WELCOA FACULTY



## What Is The WELCOA Faculty?

The WELCOA Faculty designation honors some of the best-trained wellness professionals in the country—professionals who have achieved certification in four or more of WELCOA's Well Workplace University/National Summit offerings.



## Why Is The WELCOA Faculty Important?

WELCOA certifications are the cornerstone of the Wellness Council of America. They provide the necessary training and credibility to enable worksite wellness practitioners to better engage their employees in wellness programming. The WELCOA Faculty designation credits those who strive to build effective, results-oriented wellness programs that change lives and transform organizations.

The WELCOA Faculty have achieved the highest level of worksite wellness training in the country and, as a result, this cadre is poised to effectively address two of the most relevant challenges facing American business today: improving employee health and containing escalating health care costs.



## As A WELCOA Member, How Do I Become Part Of The WELCOA Faculty?

In addition to completing four WELCOA certifications, each Faculty member must complete one additional certification every two years, and remain a WELCOA member in good standing to maintain this important designation.

To learn more about WELCOA's Certification offerings, visit...

[www.welcoa.org/services/learn/welcoa-training/](http://www.welcoa.org/services/learn/welcoa-training/)

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