

Transcription details:

Host: Bill Coppel, First Clearing Chief Client Growth Officer
Guest: Anita Shaughnessy, Wells Fargo Vice President - Well-Being Benefits Manager

Transcription results:

Intro Welcome to The Next Frontier, where we examine what the role of the financial advisor will be in a world that's being disrupted by artificial intelligence and algorithms. Our mission is to spark new conversations that create stronger connections and build greater client confidence. Join us as we look at our industry and others through a new lens and explore the opportunities emerging at the intersection of high tech and high touch. It's time for a new conversation. Are you ready?

BILL COPPEL Hi, this is Bill Coppel and welcome to The Next Frontier. COVID is a significant short term shock that's heightened our stress and anxiety levels. In addition, it's putting a bright light on these issues, issues including emotional, mental, and physical health that existed well before COVID, making them very clear and visible. Where you sit on the well-being curve influences the impact COVID has brought with respect to these issues. Although we've all been affected at some level, the higher you are on the well-being curve, the greater likelihood that you're doing better than those at the lower end of the curve. The value of creating that optimal balance between mental, emotional, and physical health as it relates to well-being is a message that we've been articulating for some time here at The Next Frontier. Over the years, we've featured a variety of well-being experts as we've heightened the importance of recognizing that the well-being of the families we serve extends far beyond their balance sheets. And we've done this because it represents an asset that most advisors have yet to incorporate into their advice models. An asset, I would argue, that's far more valuable to clients than their financial resources. What we want to share with you today is a look at this topic from a benefits perspective. Meaning the positive outcomes yielded when well-being is woven into the fabric of a family. What are the benefits that we can derive from a clear focus on well-being? And how does this translate into something you can begin to weave into the value you bring to your clients? That's what our guest, Anita Shaughnessy, is here to help us explore.

BILL COPPEL Anita is the vice president and manager of well-being programs at Wells Fargo, where she oversees the planning, development, and evaluation of well-being initiatives offered to more than 250,000 team members across 7,400 locations. Before joining Wells Fargo, Anita held leadership roles at American Express and Citibank. While at Citibank, the wellness, work-life balance and health programs she ran received multiple accolades, including two C. Everett Koop awards and published results in the American Journal of Health Promotion and the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. Early in her career, Anita consulted on the staffing and development of corporate fitness centers for General Foods, G.H. Bass, Titelist, and FootJoy. She holds a master's degree in education from Springfield College. Anita, welcome to The Next Frontier.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY Thank you. It's great to be here.

BILL COPPEL Well, thank you for joining us today. So I know a little bit about your background and it seems that you've aligned your life's work, your professional career if you will, with what's important to you personally. Tell us about how you got where you are today.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY I think my passion around health and well-being initially started with playing sports. I was on the ski team in high school and I played soccer and lacrosse in college, and I really appreciated the social and emotional lift, so to speak, that I get from exercise and also working as part of a team. And so when I first graduated college there was a growing industry called corporate fitness where companies provided onsite professionally-staffed fitness centers initially to encourage their executives to be physically active. After they launched them, they realized that all employees are important to protect and they opened them for all of the employee population. But I was really fortunate to start there managing a worksite center. And initially, I was working one-on-one with my clients setting up exercise prescriptions, teaching group exercise, making that connection on a one-on-one basis and impacting health. And then over the years, as my roles evolved and changed and I moved up in the industry, I started having the ability to kind of expand that reach to reach thousands of employees. And then during that time also the industry really shifted the focus. It first started as corporate fitness and then it went to wellness and now the term we use is well-being. And well-being is much more inclusive and it's a better depiction of all of the factors that influence our health. Things like physical, financial, emotional, social, and the personal dimensions all make a difference with our overall health and productivity.

BILL COPPEL So you are, as they say, living the dream, doing something you have a wonderful passion for and following along through that path you started out as an athlete. That's really encouraging. But as I mentioned in the intro, we're in a unique situation that's brought a number of pressing issues to the fore. A big shift many people have experienced as related to COVID has been working remotely. Now you're in an office and you've been doing this within a traditional work environment. So what effects do you see this is having on our well-being, this working remotely?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY Working remotely combined with the effects of the social isolation has had a huge effect on our collective well-being. And if you think about it, routines are really an important success factor for people either trying to make a behavior change or maintaining a behavior change. And in a few weeks those routines that we all took for granted just evaporated. So we weren't able to go to the gym anymore. We couldn't just get together casually to meet friends for a walk or run. Volunteering, attending self-help groups, all of that was off the table. And then in addition, when you think about sort of social and your family and your personal relationships, we can't visit our loved ones in nursing homes. We can't go to important social rituals like weddings, graduations, or even funerals. And then in addition to that, we're further challenged with our kids schooling at home. Some of us working from home, some with partners also working from home and in less than ideal spaces sometimes, worrying about our own health and the health of our elderly friends and family members. And when you combine all those factors, it's really a perfect storm for family conflict, overeating, negative coping strategies, sleeplessness is a big issue for many of us, anxiety, and also depression.

BILL COPPEL So when you think about social connection pre and post COVID, Anita, some of the issues that you've just shared, how do you think about what we should be doing to, I guess, protect or maybe even enhance our social, emotional, and physical health during this time?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY Sure. And I will credit my colleagues on the Employee Assistance Program side. We've partnered with them because it really is about emotional and social isolation. Social isolation actually is a risk factor for our mortality and there's some research that indicates that the lack of those social connections is a greater detriment to our health and obesity, tobacco use, and even high blood pressure. So that's pretty

groundbreaking. And while it's hard for us to think about being connected while we're apart, we can do things like give to other people, share, do simple acts of kindness for others. There's a lot of people in my neighborhood who are dropping off care packages on the steps of other people's stoops who can't go out to shop. All that stuff helps us to feel more connected. And there's also research that supports the multiple emotional and social and even physical benefits of volunteering and helping others. And one of the tactics that I'm using is... I'm creative. I love to draw. So each night, I sit down and I draw one or two handmade greeting cards that I put in a mailing envelope and send that off to a group called Cards for Hospitalized Kids and they distribute these cards to kids in the hospital with chronic illness and diseases. And it's one way that I can sort of nurture myself by that creative act by giving to others and helping others, and I feel like I'm helping those kids in the hospital and also kind of helps you put things in perspective. So your own problems are not as large sometimes when you're helping others out. I think another idea, and it's one that we don't tend to go to immediately, but be more forgiving of yourself and others, practice good self-care.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

A lot of times people think that it's selfish to take care of yourself or to exercise but you are a better person, you're a better parent, you're a better employee, you're a better friend when you get good sleep, when you take care of your personal health, you stay up to date with your immunizations and your preventive screenings, and so forth. And then also just keep yourself in check with how much you're eating and drinking or even backsliding on using tobacco. So it's a way of protecting yourself but it's also a way of helping yourself be better to the friends and family around you. And then the last I'd say is just to look to incorporate some form of movement every day. And I want to reinforce that the movement doesn't have to be a five-mile run. I'm reading a fascinating new book called "The Well-Gardened Mind" and it's written by a psychotherapist who cites the restorative effects of being out in nature and the sense of vitality and calmness experienced by people who garden. So something as simple as tending your garden can help you get that movement, help you shift your focus. Personally, movement every day is finding something that you love and making it a habit. Some people love to do yoga. Some people in my neighborhood walk or run or walk their dog. It really is finding something that works for you.

BILL COPPEL

So what I'm hearing you say, Anita, is that tending to those things that really matter in life, kind of shifting our focus away from the stuff we traditionally spent a lot of time worrying about pre-COVID, begins to re-establish that foundation to feel better and take that focus off of ourselves. As an example, as you point out, I love your story about the handwritten greeting cards. I want to learn more about that because I think that's a really interesting way to stay within a feeling of purpose despite everything that's going on. And then the whole issue of ensuring that you're getting out, you're engaging with the environment, and you're moving are all really important and we appreciate that. I think that from the viewpoint of a financial advisor, they're dealing with this every day. Not only with their own lives and their family but also with the clients that they deal with who are facing the same issues. And we've established that many of us are working remotely and our well-being continues to be an important issue. And you're dealing with this on a large scale in your professional career today and perhaps seeing a lot of different approaches across a broad spectrum of situations. You've named a few now. Share with us what you've observed and how that's influenced your initiatives that you've put in place and the outcomes those initiatives are having with a larger audience.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

I will say it's the journey, not the destination. It is a lifelong journey. You never quite get there with your personal well-being. And working through the challenges of the pandemic is certainly going to take time and a level of perseverance. And one thing

that's been really successful with our employee population is sharing what works for them. So we've had some fantastic calls about working effectively from home and people are sharing things like, "I make time to shut my computer down in the end of the day so I'm not tempted to go back into that room and log on to my email after hours." And finding and talking about those things that work for them on a personal level has really helped others and helped others put things in perspective that they're not the only ones dealing with these challenges. I think also our employees have appreciated just the flow of virtual programs that we're putting standing up, so to speak, to meet their range of needs. And again, when you think about not everybody being in the same place and everybody having different needs, I go back to those dimensions of well-being. So some people need assistance with their physical well-being or nutritional, finding ways to get new physical routines, walking in the neighborhood. We do virtual walks every Wednesdays which are kind of cool. Some others feel the need to find ways to stay connected. So helping people understand that there's webinars they can listen to that help them with child care and kids schooling at home. And some people need to know where they can go for help, professional help, either through their health plan nurse line for questions that they might have about COVID-19 or even our employee assistance program or telehealth services. So telehealth is the ability to see a professional on your phone.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

I had a cold last year and I literally saw my doctor on my phone and got a prescription mailed to my local pharmacy in the convenience of my own home. So I think, to some degree, the pandemic is presenting some positive things that will remain with us after the pandemic is over. And telehealth is one of those positives that's going to remain. I will say it's too soon for us to look at outcomes data but we're tracking participation and usage. We're getting really strong participation in our virtual meditation programs and our webinars on work and life and balancing with kids schooling at home. Since the pandemic began, our telehealth usage has skyrocketed which is a really good thing because we want to address those issues early on before they become more complex and debilitating.

BILL COPPEL

So I imagine some of the things you're observing will probably continue past this pandemic. We're seeing a lot of behavioral change. But what's interesting to me and the question I want to pose to you is this, is that all of this makes complete sense but often we make decisions based on what's in it for us and we need to see this immediate return on investment. And this goes on in corporate America. I'm sure you're challenged with that even in what you're doing for Wells Fargo in terms of the time, energy, effort, and resources it takes to, as you put it, stand up these kinds of programs. Share with us what the right mindset or what's the mindset you'd recommend as people begin to approach this journey or actually start this journey to really focus on well-being. How would you suggest they begin to think about that and what are the kinds of measures that they should be using in order to see the importance and value that it's creating for them?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

Unfortunately, it is about the hard dollar and the return on investment, and this has been a battle I've been facing since I entered this industry. And what I do is cost avoidance. So I'm planning programs that intervene early so someone doesn't develop that cancer or someone doesn't develop advanced heart disease. And they're getting a lower-cost earlier intervention but that doesn't have that hard, fast return on investment. So it's really challenging to articulate that value. I will say, with things like the pandemic and other social challenges, I would say the tide is shifting with more organizations starting to appreciate the value of measuring employee engagement and even employee satisfaction. So when employees are happy and thriving, it enhances their productivity, it improves their interpersonal work relationships and even the ability to provide great customer service. And I think you

can think about it when you're on the line with a customer service person, you can almost hear them smiling through the line. And to me, that's somebody who's grounded and happy and thriving. And so that's where we seek to articulate that value. There have been a couple of great studies. One, airlines did a study looking at better and improved health metrics at certain airports and they actually found that as the health measures improved at those low-performing airports, they had better on-time departures and arrivals and they also had fewer lost bags, and they had much better metrics around disability and work-related accidents. So that kind of research is now starting to inform rather than just that strict return on investment.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

I will say also the lack of leadership support is another challenge. It is so critical that leaders understand and value and model the right behaviors. It's almost like when you want to influence a culture of innovation and transparency, you want your leaders to exhibit those traits or those actions. And the same is true for health and well-being. And the Health Enhancement Research Organization actually released a study in January that tested relationships between workplace health and well-being practices to outcomes and they actually found that employees who work for leaders who modeled and encouraged their employees own well-being, those employees had lower health care costs and higher perceptions of organizational support. So it really is about that leadership modeling and reinforcement is so critical.

BILL COPPEL

So what I'm hearing you say is perhaps the currency in which we measure success needs to move away purely from dollars and cents. And you've identified a few currencies I think are really important. This notion of engagement, this notion of happiness and a sense of well-being that occurs when an individual partakes in the kinds of activities that you're explaining here, it really enhances their sense of purpose. I want to change the conversation a bit and focus a little bit on financial advisors. If you think about this, you've been doing this in a large corporate setting for a long time. When an advisor is working with a family, is there really a big difference between what you're trying to implement at a corporate level to help improve the well-being of, say, in this case, 250 to 300,000 employees versus an advisor who is beginning to look at a family's well-being, a very important asset on their balance sheet. Where are the parallels in what you're doing and what are the kinds of things you'd be encouraging advisors to engage with in order to help their families that they serve, the families they serve, achieve a sense of well-being?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

There are so many linkages and connections with financial health and overall personal health and well-being. Years ago, we tried to work with clients to say, "You need to lose weight, exercise, and join a gym," where the real foundation of their issue was that they didn't have the financial means to buy healthy food or even join a gym. So I cannot stress the importance of working with clients' financial health as a baseline which sets them up for success in those other dimensions. And there is a lot of tools that an advisor could use to help a family really sort of take an inventory of kind of where they are on those dimensions of well-being. An example is when I moved to Charlotte from New York seven years ago, I sort of did an assessment kind of on those dimensions of well-being, physical, financial, emotional, personal, and social, and one of the gaps I found was I needed to kind of double down on my social. Because all of a sudden I was removed from my family and friends in this strange place that I'd never lived before and I needed to kind of bolster that aspect of my overall well-being. And I would suggest that everyone can benefit from really taking an honest inventory of kind of where you are and where you want to be. And that might be financial for some people, it might be emotional for others. One of the interesting things that we're working on now with the pandemic is partnering with a philanthropy group and we're actually going to have an engagement cafe next week talking about the physical and emotional benefits of volunteering as a way to help people come through the

pandemic but also as a way to introduce our month of action which is all around supporting our communities and people who live in those communities.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

And again, it's sort of narrowing in, narrowing down to those one or two of those dimensions and understanding what steps, what small steps you can begin to establish to kind of bolster yourself in that area. Because when you're thriving across all those five dimensions, you're truly living a high level of well-being. But when one or more of those dimensions is not quite up to speed, it will affect the other dimensions. So the social dimension really carries across. Physical activity is social. You're getting together with friends. Volunteering is social. You're getting together maybe in the community and meeting new people and helping your community. There's a personal connection there. There's a passion that you're helping people around you. So all the dimensions are interconnected and I would encourage the advisors to really sit down and do a simple assessment with the family and help them to understand where they can begin to set some small goals.

BILL COPPEL

I think that's outstanding. What it reminds me of it is yesterday I was reading a research report that was just recently published that was conducted by AIG and MIT's AgeLab. Found that 57% of investors have never discussed physical health with their advisors, even though it's a topic that's top of their mind. And so I think that just points to the fact that an advisor's role can be enhanced dramatically when they begin to really focus on what well-being means and how they can ensure that the clients they serve are, in fact,-- equally focused on improving their own well-being. So thank you for sharing that advice. I think we've made a solid case for why well-being is important to businesses and families and other types of communities. And we've demonstrated how the concept can be implemented on an individual level. As an advisor, how can I begin to have that conversation you just spoke about and how do I begin to introduce this notion of well-being as an important asset on a family's personal balance sheet?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

So I'd begin with saying that the advisors should be aware of the various dimensions of well-being and there's a couple of different definitions. Gallup has a slightly different definition that we use at Wells Fargo, and the National Wellness Institute has a slightly different one. They're all pretty much the same. They're touching on those major sort of life areas. It is so important across all stages to have a high level of well-being. And when you think about-- I think about my personal financial advisor who's with Wells Fargo and she helps me to think about and plan for things like maybe paying for my kid's education or looking towards my retirement. And we want to have the ability, the physical ability and the emotional ability and the financial ability to do more of the things that we love to do. That's the bottom line. It's not about accumulating as much money as we can get. It's about really having enough so we can be successful in the things that we want to do. And so, for me, when I retire, I want to continue to be able to do recreation and hiking and swimming and I want to be able to travel and have hobbies and volunteer. And I won't be able to do that if I am not aware of those dimensions and cultivating them, so to speak. So thriving across all the well-being dimensions really enables us to achieve those goals. Another sort of I think-- it's getting a little bit more coverage now -- is thinking about the cost of poor health and retirement. So, the Fidelity Healthcare Cost Estimate just came out with the latest estimate that says a relatively healthy couple needs close to \$300,000 in assets today to offset the cost of retiree healthcare, and that doesn't even include the cost of long-term care.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

So for people like me, I don't have company subsidized retiree healthcare, neither does my husband. So I need to think about saving for that. So in addition, if I can keep myself healthy, I don't have to dip into those assets. I don't have to think about

paying that much more in healthcare. And it's funny, I liken it to the Walmart slogan, save money, live better. But you're saving yourself money but through enabling yourself to thrive across the dimensions of well-being, guess what? You're also living better. So it really is a win-win prospect and I think there's a lot to it. And it's a solid basis for financial advisors to work with their clients and help them to understand that it's not about preaching them that they need to lose weight and exercise more. It's just about taking that broad inventory of where they are because we all want to have a successful, happy, and thriving life and those are the elements that contribute to it. It's not just about the financial element, although that is an important factor.

BILL COPPEL

I think you've made a great point particularly around when I think about the research around does money buy happiness. And we know that based on the research that's been done and I often point to Ryan Howell at San Francisco State University where he demonstrated that the material objects that we often gravitate to don't provide the same level of happiness as the experiential events in our lives. And you point out, in your own case, you want to be healthy and vibrant as you age to enjoy those things that you like to do. And those are the kinds of memories that stay with us well past the automobile or the flat screen TV or whatever that status symbol is that we often gravitate to. Anita, one of the hard things that I've identified as I talked to advisors around the country about this concept of well-being is that for them to really weave it appropriately into the advice that they provide families, they in fact probably need to focus on well-being with their own life and their own family. What are your thoughts on that?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

I absolutely agree. The old adage "physician know thyself," it really needs to start with the individual internally. Because when you explore those dimensions, you understand your own journey, your successes, and your challenges, that comes through in your advice and your conversations and your stories, and it helps your clients connect with you on a deeper level so they know you're on your own journey. Maybe they're working on their social or their emotional well-being. They're trying to do more with their family and get their kids more in the loop with understanding the value of volunteering and giving back to the community. It absolutely needs to start with the advisor. And I would say it's not the advisor wagging a finger saying, "You need to lose weight and exercise more." It really is having that broad discussion about those dimensions of well-being. Again, it's much more inclusive. It's a broader definition and it meets so many more people on where they are versus just going towards that physical, nutritional aspect. Does that make sense?

BILL COPPEL

Absolutely. I couldn't agree with you more. In fact, as we were having this conversation, I want you to know that I've been standing, walking, and stretching, and trying to stay active throughout the day which is a real challenge when we're working remotely. It's easy to handcuff yourself to the refrigerator and kind of reach across the counter to your laptop. But this is really a great opportunity for us to take stock in where we are, as you pointed out, and to use this COVID period which I often refer to as, in some ways, a gift, an eye-opening gift. And as you've pointed out, the fact is advisors can help clients achieve well-being, essentially become more physically and mentally healthy not only as a way to prevent the unnecessary use of their savings and as they retire, but also more importantly to enjoy the last 8,000 days, as Joe Coughlin from MIT would say, that third half of your life and make the most of it. So Anita, as we wrap up our conversation today, let me ask this question. Clearly we're going to come through COVID and we're going to move on, but I think it's been a wonderful learning experience. While there's been tremendous pain and suffering that we've experienced globally, I've got to believe there's going to be some positive things that come out of this for us. Would you share with our listeners today what

you see optimistically coming out of the COVID situation? What will we take with us forward that we will benefit from?

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

Sure. It is odd to think about good things coming out of this challenging time. I think one of the biggest things that people will take is the awareness of the importance of social connections, whether those are through Zoom meetings or more frequent phone calls, or gatherings with friends and family. I think people's understanding of the impact of a social wellness, social health, if you want to call it, is critical. I do think the idea of being intentional and being mindful also will carry through. For me, on a personal level, since I have not been able to go out and go shopping as frequently as I used to, I've really kind of hit the reset button on what I call mindless shopping. So when I was under stress, I would sort of go into stores and kind of troll around and look for clothes or shoes that I probably didn't need. And this pandemic has really helped me to clarify and put in perspective where I was spending my time and my money and I think the same is true for many, many other people. They're gathering with families in different ways that they're finding are very joyful.

BILL COPPEL

To wrap it up, perhaps this period of time will really help us focus in on understanding and focusing on truly what matters in life and that's a good thing.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

Absolutely.

BILL COPPEL

Anita, thank you so much for joining us today. We really enjoyed this conversation. And perhaps I could talk you into coming back maybe once we're out of this pandemic cycle that we're in today and we're achieving something, a state of being, if you will, a little bit more normal than what we're accustomed to. But we would look forward to that. Again, thank you so much for your time.

ANITA SHAUGHNESSY

Thank you.

BILL COPPEL

For listeners interested in learning more about Anita and her work, you can find links to her information in this episode's show description. We hope you enjoyed our conversation today. Please take a moment to subscribe to our podcast. And if you like what you heard, please tell others about it. It helps people find us and ensures you never miss an episode. It's also a way to challenge you to think differently about your business and the role you play. And together, we can change the conversation. Thanks for listening and until next time. Be well.

Outro

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