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CHERRY HILL

When you walk into Mara Lamanna's office, you feel like you're anywhere but in a place of business.

As a holistic health counselor, Lamanna surrounds herself and her clients with soothing sounds, dim light, natural colors and literature on foods and the body.

"My patients are able to feel at ease," said Lamanna, who runs Mara Wellness. Lamanna works with individuals and businesses to promote wellness to employees. Her practice is based on nutrition and nourishment on a deeper level -- feeling fulfilled with ourselves and with others. And she said her work is helping to boost a business's bottom line.

"Companies are bringing in counselors to offset health-care costs," she said. "They want to teach prevention."

By examining a client's diet, daily activities, stress level and relationships with others, she can help establish balance, which Lamanna said is a state the body is constantly trying to achieve.

"Clients tell me their work has improved. They have mental clarity, no more mood swings and their blood sugar levels become balanced," she said.

Lamanna tries to incorporate foods into her client's diet, instead of taking foods out.

"It's nonrestrictive," she said. "Their diet changes slowly by their own comfort level so they don't feel deprived."

While no two clients are the same, Lamanna takes a look at someone's genetics, blood type, personality and cravings to distinguish what types of food and lifestyle the client will need to gain balance. Once her clients understand their bodies, they have the tools they need to do it on their own.

An art major in college, Lamanna became ill with mercury poisoning shortly after graduation. She spent her recovery researching how she became ill and how she can understand her body better. This led her to study holistic health, and eventually become a board-certified holistic health counselor. She teamed up with Cherry Hill periodontist Ira Eisenstein, who shares the same beliefs about the benefits of holistic health, and she now works out of a leased space in his Kings Highway office. She also does workshops with companies, both large and small, teaching wellness.

"This is prevention on all levels -- mind, body and soul. Big companies are creating teams of counselors to help their employees, and small to mid-sized businesses are bringing counselors in during lunch breaks, to provide access to this information.

Since the benefits of this type of counseling help prevent health ailments, Lamanna thinks the trend of counselors helping employees will continue to grow.

"Our body is the vehicle taking us through life," she said. "Everything we encounter is up to us -- it's how we would like our lives to play out."