

WASHBURN UNIVERSITY

Employee Wellness Newsletter



There's Only Wellness

By Brent Trammell

In the Employee Wellness Program, we often talk about the 8 Dimensions of Wellness—Environmental, Physical, Occupational, Financial, Social, Emotional, Intellectual, and Spiritual. This can sometimes be confusing, since what makes us feel good in one area can potentially be opposed to another. For instance, grabbing wings and beer at the bar with friends helps us blow off steam and connect (Emotional and Social Wellness), but it isn't good for our health (Physical Wellness).

This confusion comes from a misconception about what constitutes wellness. Wellness isn't determined by *what* we do, but *how* we do it. *How* are we socializing? *How* are we making ourselves feel better? *How* are we eating? There are, indeed, different dimensions to our lives, but there aren't different wellnesses—there's only wellness.

If a single dimension is "well," it's because it makes us feel good, while also supporting healthy functioning in *all* the dimensions of our lives. This is a defining characteristic of wellness—it ties everything together through a unifying ideal. If something makes us feel good, but is at odds with other areas of our life, whatever else it may be, it's not wellness. Wellness is a consideration of the part *and* the whole in the choices we make.

Though pursuing wellness can certainly be enjoyable, we might have to work a little more at finding things that serve that purpose while also supporting our overall health. Each individual choice we make for our wellness won't always be as stimulating, pleasurable, and distracting as less "well" options but, over time, navigating the various dimension of life with a mind toward wellness can provide a unique kind of enjoyment and happiness that only comes from all the parts working together.

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Wellness at WU Employee Assistance Program

Most of us spend a significant amount of time each day engaged in our work, balancing our personal lives, and navigating current events. In the midst of all this, it's important to take time to make sure we're still feeling well, both physically and mentally. Wellness is more than just not being sick, though. It's making sure we have what we need to feel good and thrive in our lives.

To really support wellness, we all need to work together; one of the best ways we can take care of ourselves and others is by making use of available resources when needed. Washburn University, partnered with

New Directions, offers a free and confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide support.

The program has a dedicated helpline with 24hr support, assessments to find the best resources, short-term counseling with up to 6 sessions from licensed professionals, and a comprehensive Health Resource Library.

Call: 800-624-5544

Online: go to ndbh.com, log in, select "Individuals & Families," choose "Employee Assistance Program," and use the passcode: Washburn.

Request a session online

"Would you get your dog up in the morning for a cup of coffee and a donut?"

Jack LaLanne

Fitness Tip: Proper Footwear

It's tempting to select running shoes just because they look cool or feel cushy, but it's actually much more important to get a proper fit with optimal support.

Running shoes should be replaced every 300-500 miles to maintain support and they should also bend at the ball of your foot, have some space between your longest toe and the end of the shoe, and keep your heel secure without sliding.

Neutral cushioning shoes are usually best for high arches, stability shoes for those in between, and motion control for people with flat feet. Selecting the right shoe is crucial for preventing pain and injury!

If it Fits Your Micros...

By Brent Trammell

Most diets we read about focus on cutting things out—carbs, fat, meat, gluten, dairy, lectins, phytates, FODMAPs, etc. If we followed everyone's advice about what's harmful in our diets, there wouldn't be much left to eat!

A more sensible approach might be to prioritize the things we need in our diets for good health—fuel for energy, vitamins, and minerals—before dramatically cutting foods out. In our never ending quest to shed a few more pounds, we often overlook the fact that most exclusory diets often leave out many valuable nutrients along with calories.

The three main components of any dietary plan are the energy-yielding nutrients: carbohydrates, protein, and fat, or *macronutrients*. Some of the most popular diet plans focus on one of these "macros" to the near-exclusion of others. Since the macronutrients are "energy-yielding" (they have calories), reducing any of them enough can lead to weight loss.

People lose weight on ketogenic/paleo/carnivore diets because they restrict calories from carbohydrates, while vegan/vegetarian/DASH-type diets often restrict calories by lowering fat intake. When we limit a certain macro, any of them, we also restrict calories and lose weight. Many blood and inflammatory markers will improve from simple weight loss - regardless of how we got there! But we may also encounter some health struggles down the road, if the restriction is too extreme.

The problem with some of these perspectives, other than making people afraid of whole food groups, is that they often neglect *micronutrients*—vitamins, and minerals. Without these, our bodies can't effectively utilize the food we eat for optimal energy, repair, and functioning.



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For instance, ketogenic diets are often low in certain B vitamins, vitamin C, selenium, magnesium, and fiber, while vegans might miss out on vitamin B12, iodine, iron, and zinc. If we just indiscriminately cut foods out of our diets, we may lose weight, yes, but we could also be compromising our energy level, metabolism, thyroid functioning, digestive health, immunity, and ability to repair tissue in the body. Not a great trade-off!

All other things being equal, most people can lose weight on radically different nutrition plans, provided calories are reduced to a similar level. They won't be equally healthy, however, so it makes sense to start with a plan that gives us the micronutrients we need for optimal functioning, then to adjust portions in accordance with our goals.

We should keep in mind our culture, personal tastes, and lifestyles when determining what dietary plan will work best for us. Sustainability and enjoyment are nearly as important as getting the foods dialed in; we won't benefit from a diet much if we can't stick with it for the long haul.

In order to help prevent deficiencies in micronutrients, while still providing a balance of macronutrients the body works well with, we can look to the acceptable macronutrient distribution ranges (AMDR) from the Institute of Medicine. Choose mainly whole foods that fit in these ratios, and you're likely on the way to a healthy, balanced diet:

AMDR

Carbs: 45-65% of calories

Protein 10-35% of calories

Fats 20-35% of calories

Simply portioning a plate as 1/2 vegetables and fruit, 1/4 lean protein, and 1/4 whole grains will put us nicely in the AMDR. It may not be the most exciting or trendy perspective, but it's no coincidence that strategies that really work are usually the ones that are the most straightforward to implement and sustain.

*References and additional information for all content available by request

Food Clarity

Intermittent Fasting (IF) is a dietary strategy that limits the amount of time we eat throughout the week or day to help reduce the calories we consume, give our bodies a chance to recover, and lose weight.

However, some people take this approach to such an extreme that they only eat one meal a day! While this can be a very effective strategy for losing weight, it is not without potential issues.

Chronically going long periods without eating can cause our bodies lose muscle mass, have difficulty regulating blood sugar, and make higher intensity activities challenging. Fitting a day's worth of calories into a narrow window can also create significant digestive troubles!

However, it's possible we might gain many of the advantages of IF, without the downsides, just by practicing a little more discipline with our usual meal schedules.

That's right, by only eating 3 meals a day in a 12-hour window, with no snacking in between, we will still be beneficially cycling between fed and fasting states. Even though this is a familiar pattern, how many people actually do it?

Whether or not your goals would benefit from a more extreme time window can only be determined by experience, but "familiar," done right, is a solid start!

Supplement Spotlight: Omega 3's

There are certain nutrients our bodies can't produce, so we have to ingest them—fats are no exception! Omega-3 fatty acids are essential lipids that are integral to properly functioning cell membranes and creating a healthy inflammatory response.

We can get these crucial fats from plant foods like flax seeds, and walnuts, but they have to be converted in the body later to forms we need, like EPA & DHA. Many people don't make this conversion very well, so it can be helpful to regularly eat seafood, where the fats are already in the right form—just 2 servings of fatty fish a week will get most people the amount of omega-3 fats they need.

It is always an option to supplement, as well, though pills don't have the same array of health-promoting nutrients as seafood. Most fish oil supplements are highly processed, and some lower-quality varieties can even be rancid, which is worse than taking nothing at all! Open up a capsule to see if it has an off, fishy smell.

It's usually good to keep things as close to nature as possible, so minimally processed options like krill, extra virgin cod liver, or salmon oils may be best. Some of these oils also have good amounts of vitamins A & D, which makes them even better, though it's still important not to overdo!

Upcoming EWP Events

Resolution Solution and Annual Wellness Fair

Lifestyle Concepts for Health and Wellness classes 3/22/22 to 5/10/22

Group wellness classes are an ideal way to learn the fundamentals of healthy lifestyle choices, track progress over a longer period of time, and establish the support of other participants in the program. The discussion-driven classes present a specific health topic each week and provide health coaching benefits in a fun, relaxed social setting.

Annual Wellness Fair 4/27/22 11:00am to 1:00pm

Washburn University will have it's 14th Annual Wellness Fair this year! It's an opportunity to learn about

local wellness products, services, and organizations in our area.

Stop by to make connections, participate in demonstrations, get free samples, and enter numerous giveaway drawings! Faculty, staff, and students are all welcome to attend!

Movement for Improvement 6/6/22 to 7/10/22

Movement for Improvement is a six-week activity-based challenge that allows participants to decide their own level of activity and involvement. There are three activity levels to aim for and participants simply submit weekly exercise minutes, with grand totals at the end for prizes!

Employee Wellness Featured Services

Nutrition Consultations—Nutrition consultations are available to help participants improve their current dietary habits by learning about foundational nutrition principles, optimal eating patterns, balanced food ratios, and food quality. Individualized food group recommendations based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans may also be used as a reference for health and weight management goals.

Body Composition Analysis—An InBody scanner provides comprehensive body composition analysis including body water, lean mass, and fat mass. Direct segmental measurement is used for improved precision and provides an excellent resource for tracking changes from exercise and nutrition plans.

Group Wellness Classes—Starting in March—see upcoming EWP Events above!

Health Coaching—Health coaching is offered as a four-session, individually-paced program to help improve nutrition habits, manage weight, and lower chronic disease risk. Through education, tracking, and support, participants will work toward personally-determined health goals. Lifestyle assessments and dietary records may be used, in addition to resources for exercise and stress management.

Lunch and Learns—By request, EWP staff and community partners are available for on-site departmental and organizational talks that address relevant health-oriented topics such as: Preventative Health, General Wellness, Nutrition/Fitness, Chronic Conditions, Back Health, and Stress Management.

Email employee.wellness@washburn.edu for more information

Healthy WU Recipe

Whole Wheat Penne with Pistachio Pesto from Harvard's Nutrition Source

1 1/2 cup pistachios, unsalted, shelled
1 cup mint leaves (or basil)
1/4 cup pecorino cheese, grated
1 large clove garlic, minced
1/2 cup tofu, silken
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
4 cups whole wheat penne pasta, cooked
2 cups cherry tomatoes
1/2 cup pasta cooking water, reserved

1. Place pistachios, mint leaves, pecorino cheese, and garlic in a food processor and process until finely minced. Add tofu and lemon juice.

Process until smooth. Slowly pour in oil and continue to process until smooth.

2. Combine penne, cherry tomatoes, and pesto in a large bowl, gently tossing. Use pasta water to thin as needed.

This meal can be made lower carb by replacing 1 cup of the pasta with other vegetables like broccoli, zucchini, and/or bell peppers. Recipe is for 4 servings.



Stress is Good for Us

By Brandon Babbage (student contributor)

Stress is good for us. Most of us have been exposed to information stating that stress is harmful and wears down our physical and mental health, but it's also an opportunity to grow. What should we make of these seemingly conflicting perspectives?

Stress Mindset Theory examines our beliefs about how stress affects our health and subsequent behavioral outcomes. Research supports the idea—our body's reaction to stress, and its impact on our health, is influenced by the *beliefs we hold about stress*. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the effects of stress mimics the individual's beliefs about it.

Psychologist Alia Crum and colleagues performed a study consisting of a control group that watched no videos, a group that watched videos detailing the detrimental effects of stress, and a group that watched videos

promoting the benefits of stress. Perhaps not surprisingly, this led to more favorable beliefs about stress outcomes in the positive video group, whereas the negative video group expressed unfavorable views.

These beliefs seem to carry over to physical outcomes, as well. An extensive review of research on Stress Mindset Theory showed negative stress beliefs are linked to an increased risk of mortality by eight years, and an increased risk of having a coronary event by eighteen years.

Do our negative beliefs about stress cause the negative health effects or are our negative beliefs about stress the result of our negative health outcomes? Either way, the evidence is compelling that a simple change of mindset may have dramatic consequences for our health and wellness.

Teach yourself that stress can be enhancing. Share ideas about the positive benefits of stress. Do research on how stress enhances our health, not just on how it hurts our health. We can use self-fulfilling prophecies to our advantage.

If stressors are seen as an opportunity for growth, this can be a positive influence on our physical and mental wellbeing, as well as those around us. Be intentional in shaping your perspective of stress as beneficial, then share that perspective.



Living Well at Washburn Award

Recognizing Melissa Lewis

nominated by Dr. Laura Murphy 2/24/22

Melissa Lewis lives well - she is more than our administrative assistant to the Sociology & Anthropology department - she goes above and beyond her assigned duties to create a welcoming and supportive environment for students and faculty. This Spring 2022 semester, she has supported the faculty both physically and mentally.

First, she has been a source of inspiration for physical fitness; she took a big step on her path to increased wellness by joining water aerobics classes at the local Topeka Natatorium, now attending several times per week. As such, she has inspired others in our department, such as Dr. Jason Miller, to join her.

Second, I was recently locked out of my car and would not have been able to make it to teach my class on time. I called the office in a panic, but Melissa dropped everything she was doing to come pick me up and get me to class right on time! I was so relieved and grateful not to have to cancel class at the last minute. Moreover, after class, she was willing to drive me back home.

In addition to this act of kindness, she has worked directly with me to carry out department morale-boosting initiatives. She helped me with field trip logistics so I could take students to see a museum exhibition in Kansas City, she made the Chartwells food order for an Anthropology night on campus for our students, and helped me create and order official department t-shirts! I hope through this award nomination that Melissa's acts of living well will serve to remind her how she has contributed to my own and others' wellness at Washburn.

Living Well at Washburn Award

Recognizing Anna-Marie Lauppe, Justine Kovatch, and Lydia Shontz-Hochstedler

nominated by Dr. Jericho Hockett 12/14/21

My father was recently diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer, and I've spent the last few weeks supporting him in emergency treatment. After I shared the general situation with my students, Anna-Marie, Justine, and Lydia each reached out to me to express care and offer support. Without revealing their personal details, each of these student employees has had close experiences with cancer.

Other colleagues with whom I work have offered brief condolences, ranging from surface relating ("It was hard when I went through that with my dad last year") to platitudes ("If there's anything I can do to help, just let me know!") to questions I should probably chalk up to nervousness ("What's his prognosis?"). In contrast (though their nomination also stands on its own, as detailed below!), Anna-Marie, Justine, and Lydia truly connected with me from the very sources of their own pain, sharing insights from their experiences that have already been immensely helpful for coping in these early stages.

They have identified practical matters that are important to attend to with a loved one's cancer diagnosis, shared specifics about how they have coped with the confusion, grief, and loss associated with cancer, solicited extra insights from their loved ones to pass on to me, offered prayers on my family's behalf, offered other specific ways of helping (e.g., cooking meals for cancer-restrained diet plans), demonstrated vulnerability by crying with me, and checked in with me since our initial conversations to see how I'm doing and if there's anything else they can do.

Anna-Marie, Justine, and Lydia are graduate student employees: over-stressed, over-worked, and under-compensated...and yet they are the best representatives of what makes this University a great place to work: the senses of community, care, and belonging that are vital to employee well-being.