

BALANCE

WELLNESS MAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

APRIL / MAY 2017 | VOLUME 2 | NUMBER 4



Getting to Better™:
**Search for
Strengths
& Find Success**

**The Awe of it All: How
to Cultivate Meaning**

**Taking the Pressure
Off of Your Voice**

**Taking Control
of Our Money**

**Committing to
Cooking Healthier**

**Navigating the
Healthcare System**

editor's MESSAGE



What does wellness look like to you?

Wellness is continuous; ever changing and growing depending on the factors affecting our lives at that particular moment. Therefore so must the Balance program continue to evolve. We are diligently expanding the programs being offered to meet your needs.

You may have been reading the articles by Wendy Sutton and feeling a connection to the information provided on Caregiver Fatigue. Wendy was a recent member added to the Balance team having joined us at the start of the 2016 school year. As the school year comes to an end we are building upon our team with additional programming focusing on Mindfulness, and the addition of "The Mindful Brush" with Willow Wolfe – check out Page 19 for more information on this hands on program.

This month we are continuing our encouragement to find a photo of what wellness means to you. Our feature photo comes from "Making Sense of Mindfulness" Balance presenter Keith Macpherson photo collection. He shares with us his thoughts on this issue's cover page:

"When we open our heart and mind to the present moment that is before us, we wake up to the profound wonders that life has to offer. Take time to breathe, connect and listen to the moment you are experiencing right now and there you will find balance. This photo was taken in Willow Island in Manitoba's Interlake. I love how connected I feel when visiting this beautiful place in our province of Manitoba. The elements of water, air, earth and wind all come alive and have secrets to share with me when I am paying attention to their presence. It is a sanctuary of wellness for me."

Robyn Braha
Wellness Coordinator



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society



BALANCE
mind body spirit
THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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4

enjoy life more

DAY 11

Take a time-out

Enjoy some quiet time. Close your eyes. As your thoughts drift, breathe. And if you like, take a warm bath and feel the warmth of the water while you sip some sparkling fruit juice... this is YOUR time.

- Courtesy of Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Mental Health Promotion Team WRHA



Vocal hygiene: **7**
Taking the pressure off of your voice



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Getting to Better™: Search for strengths and find success



By Stephen de Groot, Myriad Consulting www.stephendegroot.com

Got strengths? Personal reflection

Take a moment to think about your life or your work. What is going well right now? What are you doing well? What are you succeeding at? How did you contribute to that success? What things did you do or are you doing “right”? Who else was helpful and/or contributed to things going well? For each person, place or thing that you discover as a contributor to that success, ask yourself these two questions: What difference do/did they make? How are/were they helpful?

This type of exploration is known as a strengths-focussed inquiry. The questions are purposefully directed to cultivate and illuminate the people, places and things that contribute to your success and your overall wellness.

A problem with problems

It is unfortunate that for many people, strengths-focussed questions like, “what are your strengths?” or “what are you good at?” can be really difficult to answer. Others find it easier to answer questions like “what’s not going well?” or “what are you not good at?”. Most of us spend a great deal of our time, energy and focus on problems. Many of the reasons for this are beyond the scope of this discussion, one, however, is definitely worth a mention.

Most approaches to behavior improvement and performance development continue to focus on deficits, weaknesses and/or undesirable behavior at the expense of strengths and successes.

Many conversations regarding improving behavior and/or performance are corrective in nature and focus on what needs to be modified and/or fixed altogether.

Unintentional consequences

A predominant focus on problems can have unintentional and unfortunate

consequences for how people experience themselves. Simply put and for starters, it just doesn’t feel good. A consistent focus on problems can lead to feelings of guilt, shame, fear and can contribute to an increased sense of pessimism, helplessness and even hopelessness. Such feelings and experiences do little to positively motivate and engage people towards overall growth and success. A strict problem focus can actually limit potential and lead away from overall wellness.

When it comes to developing people and their potential, an attempt to eliminate limitations by focusing on problems, does little to build them up. A problem focused inquiry can inform us only on what is not preferred, what we don’t like and/or what we need to change and/or need to move away from. Human possibilities are not found in problems, deficits or weaknesses. Our potential lives in our capacities; success and overall growth can only be achieved, not by focusing on and eliminating weaknesses alone, but by searching for and developing our strengths.

Start with a search for strengths

Given the predominant problem-orientation that pervades most approaches to behavior and/or performance improvement it is critical that a strengths focus be made a priority in every interaction and engagement. When we are focussing on our own or others’ development, we must start with strengths!

All strengths approaches begin with an inquiry into what is going well. My favorite strengths-focussed questions are Appreciative Statements and Questions, Exception Questions and Better Questions.

Appreciative Statements and Questions are great for cultivating and identifying individual and group strengths that can be built upon and leveraged in the pursuit of important goals. It is not uncommon



Becoming strengths based – tips for leaders

1. Prioritize a strengths-focus for students and staff members alike.
2. Initiate interactions, meetings and performance reviews with, “What’s Going Well?”
3. Begin to utilize the 3 types of strengths focused statements and questions offered here.
4. Schedule a one-on-one with each staff member to discuss strengths only.
5. Recognize and reinforce interactions and actions that are strengths-focused.

for appreciative questions to illuminate strengths and additional resources that are just outside of our and others’ awareness.

- I like having you in the class, because you are kind to students
- You’re really good at talking through challenging situations.
- When and how have you succeeded before this?
- What are the good things that are going on right now?
- What do you like about being here (even if it’s one small thing)?
- What went well today; at your appointment; with your class, project etc.?

Exception Questions are based on the idea that no matter how difficult and/or challenging a problem is, there are always exceptions to the problem. This means

that there are times and/or situations when the problem wasn't so much of a problem. It is up to us to look for the exceptions in difficult or challenging situations so that we may discover the strengths and resources available in the exceptional times. When we can discover what was happening in the exceptional times, we are able to uncover and illuminate resource possibilities that have been ignored, minimized, and/or overlooked.

- Can you tell me about a time when you were able to get your work in on time? How did you do that?
- Can you tell me about a time when you felt anger toward a student and did something other than yell at him?
- During your probationary period, you had excellent attendance at work. How were able to do that? What was happening for you that helped you get here regularly and on time?
- Can you tell me about a time that you felt staff members were not on your back? What were you doing to make that happen?

Better Questions can lead to the positive exceptions to difficulties as well as illuminate a variety of strengths and resources that were operating at that time. Better questions are quite versatile in that they can be used to focus on the past and/or to consider better in the future.

- Can you tell me about a time when things have been better for you?
- Can you tell me when you had a teacher or principal that made things better?
- Have there been times in your career when you were feeling and/or doing better?
- What are the first things you would notice if things were a little better at work?
- If things were just a little better for you in the classroom, what would work look like?
- When your team is doing better, what will that look like for you?

Positive and profound results

Strengths, as I have written about before, make up one of the four major sources of Most Meaningful and Motivation. When strengths are not identified they lay dormant as an untapped resource for improving and optimizing individual and group development, success and overall well-being. The following represent some of the positive by-products that are the result of strengths-focussed efforts.



It feels good

A focus on strengths feels positive, refreshing, and uplifting— just good overall. Imagine if this was the only benefit?! That alone is a pretty good outcome, given that usually when we feel better, we do better and the people we are responsible for do better also. Feeling good is great, and can be the beginning to improving the climate of the classroom and the school overall.

Affirming and validating

It is extremely affirming and validating to hear that we are saying and doing a lot of things right. Most people, to some degree, like to hear about their strengths as much as possible, especially in the tough times, when things may not be going well or when we feel like we are moving away from better. Being affirmed and validated around what we are doing well can act as a buffer, making us able to hear about or face with strength and courage the things we need to improve or develop further.

Sense of real competence and confidence

A strengths focus points in the direction of successes and concrete results from efforts and accomplishments of both the past and the present. Real success from real strengths results in real competency. A strengths approach provides the valuable message that people are capable; they have done it, they can do it, and they will do it again! A strong sense of competence and

confidence are invaluable assets for people who are developing others. Increased competence and confidence is directly linked to increased satisfaction, motivation, engagement and performance.

Provides hope and optimism

A strengths approach provides a great deal of hope and optimism by illuminating that there is more to us or a situation than just deficits, weaknesses or problems. Even if hope is all we have, it can be everything. Hope can sometimes mean the difference between giving up and getting up – giving in or giving it one more try.

Additional resources

A diligent and focused strengths inquiry can turn identified strengths into additional resource possibilities that were previously unnoticed and/or operating outside of awareness; a focus on strengths begets more strengths and successes. It increases the pool of possibilities—potential and available raw materials necessary for making the journey to better.

The role of leaders

The primary role of leaders is to inspire the optimal development of others towards the most positive and preferred outcomes. Given that individual and group strengths are a major source of motivation, utilizing a strengths approach in the context of leadership would serve as a potent measure for optimizing the well-being and potential of others. **B**

Vocal hygiene: Taking the pressure off of your voice



By **Caitlin Buchel, RSLP, SLP (C), M.Cl.Sc. , Buchel Speech & Language Group**

It is 2:45 PM and you are ready to start your lesson on fractions. Half of your class looks expectantly at you...while the other half continues to chat with their neighbour. One student is not even sitting down, and is wandering around the back of the class. It's close to the end of the day and your voice is tired but you need to get the lesson started. What do you do?

Teachers will frequently mention that behavior management in their classroom can take a toll on their voice. This is because directing students away from distractions and towards their lessons requires constant communication. Although there are times when you need to speak up, there are also non-verbal behavior management strategies that can be used to take the pressure off of your voice. You will need to tailor any strategy to fit your style, the age of your students, and the "personality" of your classroom. With that said, here are a couple that you might want to try out.

Music and rhythm can be powerful tools for classroom management, regardless of age. For young children, try clapping out a pattern and then have them try to clap it back. Continue with the same rhythm until the entire class is clapping along. You may find that they are so busy trying to figure it out that they won't have time to talk.

For older students, try playing current songs that they might know, quietly on your smart phone. The goal is to have the students quiet down so that they can hear the music and guess the song. By creating a reward system for correctly guessing the name of the song or quieting down the fastest, you can encourage participation by



everyone in the class. In fact, small reinforcements like a "Hall of Fame" on your board may go a long way!

Noisemakers are also an inexpensive and easy tool for getting focus in the classroom. Keep a bell or whistle with you at all times, and use it to get your students' attention when distractions are starting to get the best of them. Teachers often think to use these tools in large areas such as the gymnasium or the school yard, and they certainly are useful in those situations. However, they can be wonderfully effective in a traditional classroom as well.

Check us out in the next issue of *Balance* for more ideas on how to manage behavior without losing your voice!

Manage your class without losing your voice:

1. Music is a powerful tool! Have younger children clap a pattern back to you.
2. Play current music and have students guess the name of the song and artist for older students.
3. Noisemakers are a quick and easy way to get students' attention inside the classroom and out.
4. Don't underestimate the power of small reinforcements such as a "Hall of Fame" for getting your students to quiet down quickly. **B**

Caitlin Buchel is the owner and managing clinician of the Buchel Speech & Language Group, a private speech-language pathology (SLP) practice offering services in Winnipeg, and throughout Manitoba.

Messy: the art of managing untidy conversations



By Danielle Fullan Kolton, PhD, The Manitoba Teachers' Society

Teachers talk. They talk with students, parents, other teachers, principals, and clinicians. They talk all day long. Though many of these conversations are productive and positive, some can become unintentionally messy. By messy, I mean disorganized, muddled, ambiguous, emotional, loud, and ... well ... rather nausea inducing. Yet, author Tim Harford (2016) embraces the idea that “there can be magic in messy.” In his book, *Messy: The Power of Disorder to Transform our Lives*, he advocates for a little more mess by trying to dissuade a universal attraction to tidy.

Tidy. The word evokes a sense of satisfaction, control, and predictability that many people seek: Tidy spaces, tidy closets, tidy desks, tidy routines, tidy calendars, tidy classrooms. The quest for tidy seduces people to purchase Ikea bins and boxes, to binge shop at Staples for things like label makers, and to become addicted to Pinterest organization boards.

This desire for tidy also sends many Members flocking to our Crucial Conversations workshops in search of a little magic to make difficult conversations more manageable. Though the workshop is very effective at building confidence and capacity to prepare for and deliver a message, it always seems to fall short of the “what happens when things go sideways?” question. This is because having conversations is not formulaic; it is impossible to predict every possible turn. Rather, you have to roll with it, and that is the vulnerable part.

Sadly, having a difficult conversation is not at all like a Choose Your Own Adventure book where you can flip



ahead and discover the outcome for each word choice and conversational judgment. That would be super helpful. And less anxiety provoking. And tidy. However, talking face-to-face happens in real time. Consequently, it is impossible to sanitize the dialogue from either person's history, reactive patterns, or triggers.

The best you can hope for is to manage the messy. This means that it

will still be messy, but you are using tools to contain it and minimize the chances that it will turn into a clean up on aisle six. Typically, three distractions can interfere with your ability to speak and listen in real time so that you achieve a satisfactory outcome while building the relationship. The next time you are in conversation, consider these messy management tools:

1 Messy:

Your palms sweat, your heart beats, your eyes well up, your face flushes, you feel wobbly. You forget your own name and any messaging that you had previously prepared, and it feels like your brain needs a reboot. This is reptilian brain, a physiological and instinctive fight, flight, or freeze response.

Manage the messy:

Pay attention to your body and reframe the stress response as a mechanism to keep you alert. Take a deep belly breath and engage in a detached cognitive task to recall blood to the brain. Ask yourself, what do I want for the relationship, the outcome, and myself? Breathe.

Voices from the field:

Unexpected turns in a conversation can rattle a person. When this happens, Bettina Nyman, a School Psychologist from Winnipeg School Division, says that self-awareness and careful listening are important strategies. She is also not afraid to pause the conversation or take a break; this provides time to process, regain perspective, and manage emotions before coming back to finish the conversation.

2 Messy:

The person you are speaking with cries or yells at you.

Manage the messy:

First, breathe; emotions are a natural by-product of difficult conversations. Though your instinct may be to barrel through the conversation to get your message out, resist this urge. Clarify your intent and practice humble curiosity. This means that you risk being wrong. Also, apologize if necessary: Apologizing does not always mean you are wrong and the other person is right. It means you value the relationship more than your ego. That said, there is a big difference between a raised voice and aggressive or abusive behaviour. When people are unable to communicate safely, you need to define boundaries for

the conversation and discontinue if necessary. It is okay to say, "I am feeling uncomfortable with the volume and tone of this conversation, and I would like to continue talking tomorrow so that there is space for both of us to talk and listen to one another."

Voices from the field:

"We get into emotional trouble when we take things personally," says Darcelle Saunders, principal in Lord Selkirk School Division, "especially when hurtful accusations can trigger us." She cautions against reacting emotionally in response to others' emotions. She believes that it is important to be resilient in those moments to stay on track in the conversation and be open to listening rather than defending yourself. Anne Christianson, a reading clinician in Winnipeg School Division, also deals with emotion in difficult conversations by creating a "mindful gap"; that is, a space between herself and the emotions. She describes it like catching a ball and holding it out in front of herself. By creating this distance, she is able to look at the emotion rather than absorbing or engaging with it. This deescalates the intensity of her response and increases empathy. Having empathy allows her to hear and validate what the other person is saying, and this makes it safer to stay in conversation.

3 Messy:

Your mouth becomes a runaway train spewing a downward spiral of nonsense in which you keep talking, retelling, and complicating your message. In our workshops, we discourage this "talky-talky".

Manage the messy:

Jennifer Abrams, the author of *Hard Conversations Unpacked*, advises that people speak no longer than 60-90 seconds before inviting the other person to share their perspective. Since "your communication is only as effective as the response you get," (West,

2012) people need to talk less, listen more, and ask questions to ensure that their message was received as it was intended.

Voices from the field:

Wade Houle is an Indigenous studies and graphic arts teacher in Mountain View School Division. To avoid this condition of "talky-talky", he reminds himself that he has made his point: "When we overtalk a point, we are not getting any further or progressing; the conversation actually becomes very static." In conversation with others, he really works hard on listening, "If I am listening I try to limit my words, because I don't want to become the person who is creating the static. It is my job to listen and affirm," he says.

Teachers are in the business of building relationships and collaborating with other human beings, so being vulnerable and authentic in conversation requires a little bit of messy. Preparation and forethought are important first steps (when possible), but not with the intention of sanitizing the conversation. Talking in real time requires self-awareness and listening with presence rather than trying to control every turn. In fact, "tidy conversation" is an oxymoron; aiming for that will surely leave you chronically disappointed in yourself and others. The next time you find yourself going reptilian brain while being yelled at and explaining yourself repeatedly, be sure to breathe and look for the magic in the mess. It is there, especially in those moments when you learn more about yourself and build trust with other people by keeping it real. **B**

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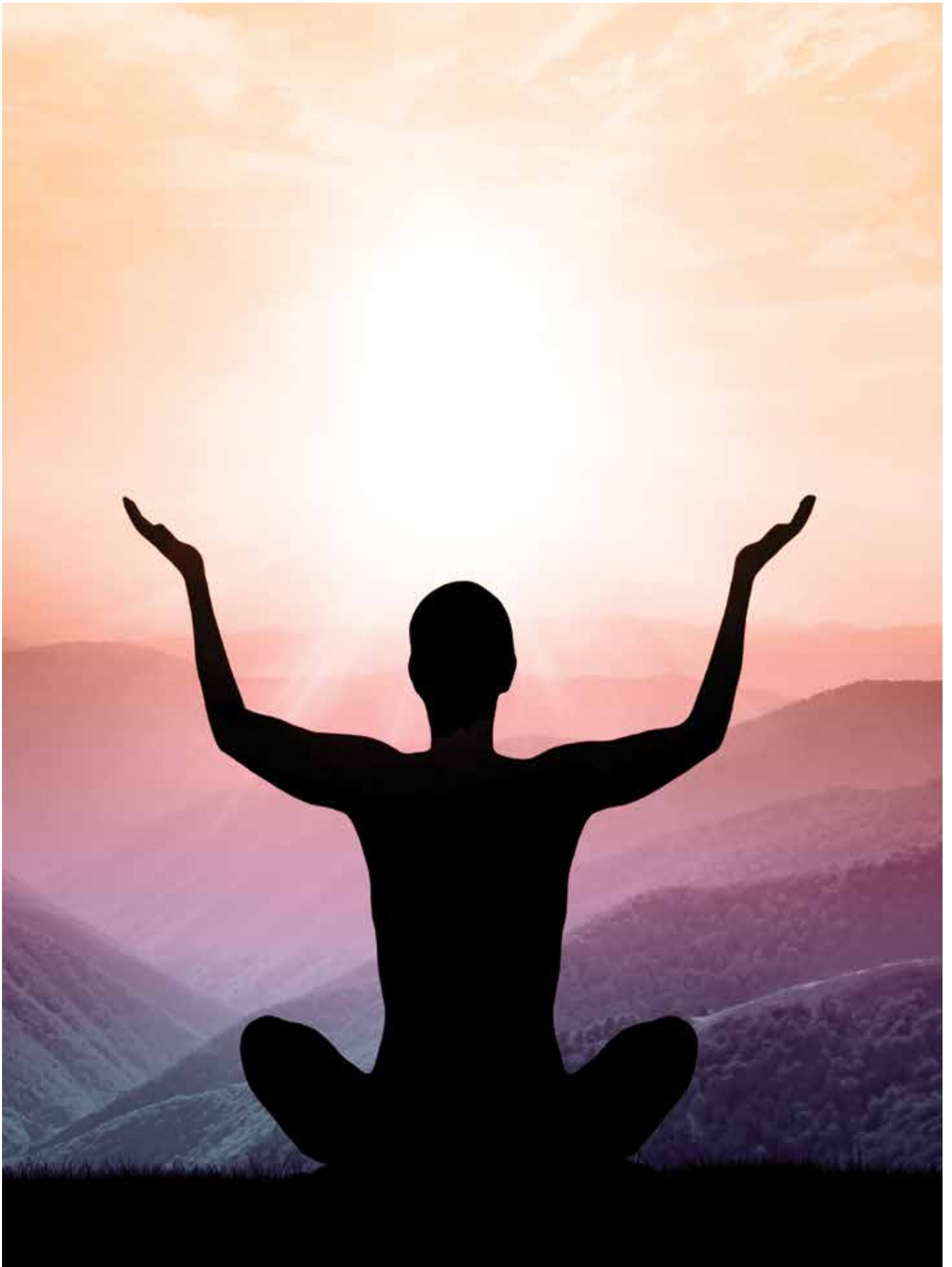
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Keith's corner: How to cultivate meaning

By Keith Macpherson www.keithmacpherson.ca



I am currently floating 30,000 feet above the ground in a metal tube that coasts through the air taking me thousands of miles across the continent to a completely new environment where I will enter into a new time zone and climate. This metal tube I am referring to is better known as an airplane. How is this possible that we can wake up in Winnipeg and on the same day fall asleep in California? As I ponder this apparent miracle I also look down at my fingers typing these words onto the screen and become fascinated with the fact that I have the ability to communicate consciously with you through the invention of a computer and a language system that enables us to understand each other. I further become extremely bewildered by the fact that while all this is taking place I have fingernails that continue to grow automatically without my needing to do anything.

Consider all the miracles that are taking place in this very moment just to support us having a conscious experience of the present moment? An invisible source that we call air provides an infinite amount of oxygen to filter in and out of our bodies keeping us alive. A vessel in our chest automatically pumps a constant thump to circulate life into every corner of our bodies. The incredible list of miracles goes on and on. As you look around you right now and consider all that is taking place on so many levels of awareness it becomes difficult not to enter into a place of awe and appreciation. The famous Sufi poet Rumi summed up what I am describing here in a very simple but profound statement. He claimed, "Sell your cleverness and purchase bewilderment." It becomes far too easy to take everything around us for granted as we rush through our lives working at our jobs, paying our bills, caring for our children, preparing meals, staying on top

of our relationships and carrying out all the tasks of our lives.

In a world of constant coming and going it becomes very easy to dwell in what I refer to as our conscious mind aspect of who we are. This is the part of our mind that is constantly making decisions and analyzing the details of our life. In a culture that has become bombarded with the added pressures of digital phones, social media and emails many of us find ourselves in a place of constant assessment of ourselves and others and quickly jump to conclusions about the way things should be in order to fulfill our desires for more and more knowledge, material wealth and even status. It can truly begin to feel like a never-ending cycle of coming and going whereby we lose ourselves in the fast paced daily grind.

If you have been finding yourself in a pattern of anxiously over analyzing every step you take and on the verge of mental exhaustion perhaps a saving grace will be the mindfulness principle of opening your mind to a new way of operating. As Rumi so accurately described, you can sell your cleverness and purchase a new state of bewilderment with a few simple shifts in your thinking. The amazing part is when we change the way we think about things, everything around us changes. To become an appreciator is one of the most effective and efficient ways to step out of the old familiar pattern of over-analyzing and striving for more and move into a state of inner peace, calm and ultimately unconditional love for ourselves and all those around us. When we start tuning in consciously to the thoughts of what we are grateful for and what we appreciate around us immediately the physiology of our body shifts to one of ease and we find ourselves in a new and

beautiful experience of not sweating the small stuff.

I would like to invite you to try out the following activities to move into a deeper state of awe and appreciation with the intention of shifting out of the old paradigm of striving to get ahead and gain more to one in which all things flow to you with ease.

Sell your cleverness and purchase bewilderment activities to try:

1. Mindfulness Walk- Stop whatever you are currently doing (no matter how important it may seem) and go for a short mindfulness walk. On this walk set your intention to be completely open to all that shows up around you and commit to appreciating and being awe-struck by all the miracles that surround you. From the chirping of a bird in a tree to the sound of each foot as it caresses the ground beneath you, find all there is to appreciate and acknowledge as a miracle.
2. Letters of Gratitude-Handwrite and deliver short letters of gratitude to the people in your life that you appreciate and honor. List all the things you appreciate about them and let it come from the heart. This simple practice will definitely open you to bewilderment.
3. Appreciation Attitude-Commit to being a full-time appreciator of everyone and everything that crossed your path today. Notice that when you shift to a place of appreciation not only do you feel amazing but everyone and everything around you experiences the benefits. **B**

Keith Macpherson is a motivational speaker, yoga instructor, life coach and recording artist. To connect further with Keith Macpherson and to sign up for his daily inspirational email and other free gifts, visit: <http://www.keithmacpherson.ca>

Financial literacy: Taking control of our money



By Brian Denysuik, Creditaid www.creditaid.ca

Do you have control of your money or is it filtering through your fingers each pay day and waving goodbye? There is one sure way to take control of your money and that involves developing your spending plan.

I have a lot of people ask me; “Do I really have to do this”; “Is there an easier way”? The simple answer is yes and no! When you go on vacation you don’t just jump in the car and start driving. Can you imagine if you said; “Okay family, we are going on vacation” and off you go with no map or GPS, and no destination in mind? Where are you going to get to? Will you just be driving in circles? It is the same way with money. If we don’t have a plan, guess what? Our money goes everywhere and nowhere!

To start building your spending plan you need some simple forms. Here is a link to some excel spreadsheets that I recommend: <https://www.creditaid.ca/budgeting/building-a-tracking-spending-plan>

There are three key spreadsheets, *Form 1 - The Monthly Budget Form*, *Form 2 - The Irregular Expenses Form* and *Form 3 - The Payroll Planner*.

The key to money management is simple, develop the plan and track the progress. If you do this I guarantee that you will be in a far better place financially after just three months than where you are today. You will clearly understand where your money is going and what you need to adjust to make sure you are not spending more than you are bringing in. A budget can be as simple or complicated as you want to make it. So here are the basics that I recommend.

Step 1: Get a Transaction Register from your financial institution or use an electronic version. Write down all money coming in and all money going out in this register. Don’t forget to write down the pre-authorized debits each month that are

automatically coming out of your account.

Step 2: On form # 1 in the Budget column prepare your draft budget. This is going to be your best guess at what you are spending each month for each category. You will adjust this later so don’t worry about being too precise.

Step 3: Form #2 (Irregular Expenses). On this form think about things you spend money on annually. An example is birthdays for two children. Let’s say you spend \$300 on each child. You would record an “annual expense” of \$600 (\$300 x 2 children). The monthly savings will calculate for you and it should show \$50.00. This is the amount you need to put away each month so that you have the money when the birthdays come. Use this same concept for all the annual expenses you can think of. The total “Monthly Savings” will be the amount that you will record on Form #1 on the last expense item called “Irregular Expenses”.

Step 4: Form # 3 (Payroll Planner). The payroll planner will help you spread out the expenses so that you can figure out what you want to pay with each pay cheque. There is enough room on this form to include two people’s pay cheques. Use Form # 1 (Monthly Budget) to help guide you as these are the same numbers that you will use, but you will break down the expenditures in a little more detail. Let’s use Food for example. Let’s say you recorded a food cost of \$1000 per month. The easiest way to look at this is to say that you will spend \$500 from one pay cheque and \$500 from the second pay cheque on food. If you are a couple and one person is covering food then you can figure out who will be paying the utilities bills and from which pay cheque. This step will take a little more figuring out but once you have it nailed down it will help keep you out of that expensive bank overdraft.



To start building your spending plan you need some simple forms. Here is a link to some excel spreadsheets that I recommend: <https://www.creditaid.ca/budgeting/building-a-tracking-spending-plan>

Step 5: Keep the receipts for everything you spend. At the end of the month or weekly if you prefer add up all the expense for each category. An example would be to add up all the food receipts and enter them on Form # 1 in the column called (Month). You can rename the months as required. Once you have gone through two months I suggest that you adjust your Monthly Budget to reflect the actual expenditures that you have been recording.

Step 6: Make sure that you are moving your “Irregular Expenses” into a savings account each month. It is very important that you remove these funds from your chequing account. You might want to take a look at Tangerine Bank of Canada (or any other financial institution) where you can nickname the savings account to match the Irregular Account names you are putting money aside for. This makes it much easier.

Keep adjusting your spending plan as needed to reflect your financial life as it unfolds. This is a great exercise for you to do with your spouse/significant other so that you are both on the same financial wellness page in life. **B**

Brian Denysuik is a local credit counsellor and registered insolvency counsellor at Creditaid who has been in the financial services industry for over 30 years.

Seven excuses to not ride your bike to work and how to overcome them

By Dave Elmore, Green Action Centre

Changing our habits is difficult. How we travel is probably something many of us don't think about as we automatically reach for our car keys. If you have thought about making different commuting choices, you have already taken the first step. Are you on the cusp of hopping on your bike, but still have some nagging doubts? We have put together the seven top excuses we have heard from people for not biking to work, and have come up with simple solutions to these problems.

1. I'll arrive at work all sweaty

By taking the step of riding to work you might just get your employer to start seeing the advantages of making your workplace more bike friendly. If you have no showers available in your office maybe there is a local gym close by that you can use. If not, just give yourself lots of time and ride at a relaxed pace. You can then ride a bit harder on the way home if you want to turn your commute into a workout. You can always bring a change of clothes and some baby wipes for a quick clean when you arrive at work. Alternatively you can keep a wash cloth and towel at the office to freshen up when you arrive.

2. It's too dangerous

While there is no guarantee you will never get injured riding a bike, there is safety in numbers. The more of us that ride bikes, the more our culture begins to expect and accept bikes. Research tells us that riding a bike is no more dangerous than walking down the street or driving. I have found a few simple things that help make riding pretty darn safe:

- Communicate. Know your signals and use them. Drivers for the most part will accept you and in many cases even respect you if you communicate with them. And don't forget to shoulder check before you make any signals.

- Ride a bit further from the curb (at least 1 metre) and well outside of the door zone of parked cars.
- Ride in a straight line as much as possible – don't weave in and out. You need to be predictable and stay in the motorist's field of vision.
- Don't pass cars on the right along the curb. It creates tension and in fact is against the law. Instead just take your place in line or you can always get off your bike and walk past the traffic on the sidewalk and remount when possible.
- Never bike on the sidewalk. It's not just illegal, it is far more dangerous than being on the road.

3. I need my car at work

Not everyone can ride to work and there are some jobs that require a car for work-related travel. If this is you, you might want to ask yourself if you need it every day. Are there days when your schedule doesn't require a car or can you schedule those days on your own? Maybe you could use your bike or bus for some of those commitments, or carpool with a co-worker. It's worth asking the questions to gain all the benefits of riding a bike.

4. I have to pick up my kids

Another common reason people give for not cycling to work is the need to pick up their kids after work, or they worry "what happens if my child gets sick at school?" First, instead of dropping off your kids by car, why not use bikes and let them enjoy getting to school under their own power? It's a great time to interact with your kids plus you can teach them to be safe bike riders along the way. Second, having had to deal with sick children over the years the vast majority of the time, the situation is not that serious. If it is, the teachers will likely have taken care of it even before you arrive in your car. When I did need to get

there quickly, I knew there was always the option of taking a cab. The cost is minimal compared with the money saved by not driving your car to work every day.

5. I need to look professional

Concerns about helmet hair, make-up and a professional dress code can be keeping some people from riding. Adopt a European approach and ride in your work clothes. Pedalling at an easy pace and choosing a step-through bike with fenders and a chain guard can help your clothes stay clean and ensure you arrive looking fresh. If you want to ride fast, store what you need at the office (clothes, make-up, hair products, etc).

6. I have too much stuff to carry

The increase in everyday cycling means there is now a wide range of ways to carry things on your bike – panniers (saddlebags), front or rear baskets, backpack or messenger bag, and bike trailers. You'll be amazed over time how efficient you can plan and pack what you need. Check out your closest specialty bike shops for options.

7. I'm not fit enough

Remember that it's not all or nothing – start with riding one or two days a week. If you have secure storage at your workplace, ride to work one day and catch a bus home. You may even be able to work out something with a co-worker to get a ride home. The next day bus to work and ride home. You can also tuck your bike into the car and park partway to work then ride the remainder.

Change is never easy, but by taking the time to consider your options and plan a solution, you are sure to find success. Enjoy the ride! **B**

Green Action Centre is a non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, serving Manitoba. For more information visit greenactioncentre.ca.



A practical guide for caregivers: Navigating the healthcare system



By Wendy Sutton, *Where Next? A Path for Caregivers* wherenxt.blogspot.ca

Caregivers are entitled to be included in the care of those who depend on them. Don't be intimidated. Be an advocate for your parent. Persist and insist on being included as a full partner in care.

A school is a community. Communication within the building is simple. Communication between home care, social services, physicians, hospitals and personal care homes is complex.

Cheryl's story

Every time Cheryl's husband saw a different doctor or visited a different facility

there would be problems transferring all the needed information. She decided to write a fact sheet of important information about her husband's conditions, allergies and medications. She gets very positive responses from staff when she passes on the sheet. Cheryl became the consistent link. She made a proactive decision to "connect the docs."

Be proactive

The Permission Forms

You are much more likely to be listened to if you have formalized your role as a

caregiver. The power of attorney gives you financial powers only. To have a say in the healthcare system you need to be the Patient Advocate and the healthcare Proxy.

The Patient Advocate form gives you permission to advocate for another with healthcare professionals. Under PHIA (Personal Health Information Act), an advocate may be designated in writing and given specific powers to act on another's behalf. Anyone going through a serious illness should designate a friend or family member as a patient advocate.



You are much more likely to be listened to if you have formalized your role as a caregiver. The power of attorney gives you financial powers only. To have a say in the healthcare system you need to be the Patient Advocate and the healthcare Proxy.

weeks. There is no communication with the family physician. Nurses and healthcare aides work shifts and often work part-time. If you find communication difficult, head to the social work department and ask for help.

Be aware that readmissions often occur when patients are discharged prematurely or don't understand their discharge instructions. My nephew was with my mother who was about to be discharged. As the doctor was talking to her, my nephew asked, "Gramma, do you know who I am?" She looked at him, puzzled and said, "No." She was then admitted and assessed for placement in a care facility.

Be assertive

Expect to meet resistance. Expect to be frustrated. Preparing for these situations keeps us from handling them poorly.

NO... is not always an acceptable answer.

Create a cheat sheet. Use these 5 steps to prepare for challenging situations.

1. Respond - Really? That's interesting. I was hoping for a different solution.
2. Express Concern - My concern is
3. Ask about Alternatives - Are there alternatives we could consider?
4. Request an Explanation - Can you help me understand your decision?
5. Persist - I'd like to meet again to discuss this further.

If you aren't making progress, call for back-up. Take someone with you who can add leverage to your position.

Never let the attitude of others become an obstacle to getting the best care possible. Remember: No one knows the child like the parent. No one knows the vulnerable parent like the adult child. **B**

Wendy Sutton is the creator of Where Next? A Path for Caregivers. She is a retired teacher from River East Transcona School Division.

A patient advocate can:

- Arrange medical appointments for you
- Attend medical appointments, tests and treatments with you
- Be present when a doctor or provider speaks with you
- Review your doctor's information and orders to be sure they are clear
- Ask questions about your healthcare and test results
- Access your personal health information if you agree
- Track your medications
- Make decisions about your treatment with your input

The healthcare proxy is named as part of a healthcare directive. The proxy gives you legal permission to act on another's behalf if they are incapable of acting for themselves.

It is a reasonable decision to choose one family member to act in medical situations. Too many people cause confusion. It is a poor idea to choose two people to act together. Simply choose an alternate.

Give copies of the forms to the family doctor, Home Care Case Coordinator, and frequently seen specialists. Keep a copy to provide to hospitals. Be sure to have copies in the ERIK.

The Homework

Educate yourself. Links to the major chronic illness organizations can be found on the Where Next? site. Patients may receive better, safer care if they and their families are knowledgeable about their medical conditions and treatment options. Choosing Wisely Canada has excellent advice about tests, treatments and procedures.

Manitoba's S.A.F.E. Toolkit has valuable healthcare information, tips and resources that can help patients and families advocate for themselves and each other. It consists of key patient safety topics in summary and full versions. (S.A.F.E - Self-advocacy for everyone)

- Know Your Patient Rights
- Choose Your Patient Advocate
- Know Your Healthcare Plan
- Access Your Medical Records
- Talk with Your Doctor - Read this soon
- Work with Your Pharmacist
- Prepare for Your Stay in Hospital
- Prepare for Surgery
- Know The Process when Harm Happens
- Know The Steps in Stating Your Concerns

The Journal

Document meetings, appointments and

phone calls. Take notes. Record questions to be asked and answers given. Keep a list of contacts. Keep copies of current medications here.

The Personal Touch

Establish rapport with people who work in the system. They are a great source of tips on how the system works.

I once asked my surgeon, "Do whiny, wimpy patients get more consideration than the ones who tough it out quietly?" She answered, "Darn, did I forget to tell you to cry?"

When you are reaching the breaking point tell someone before you lose it. Shedding a tear once in a while is not a sign of weakness. Open up. Letting people in on your situation can help them relate to you on a personal level.

Always show appreciation when it is due. You will meet wonderful people along the way. A thank you card can make someone's day.

Be aware

Family doctors

Be aware that they are often not aware of non-medical support services in the community. 30% of caregivers I spoke to experienced initial resistance from their parent's family doctor. Changing family doctors is rarely an option. Consider this a teachable moment and work towards a positive collaboration.

Home Care

Be aware. Home care is only a supplement to the family. Eldercare is the responsibility of the family. Manitoba offers the most accessible home care in the country. The Manitoba Guide to Home Care Services is available online. Also investigate the alternatives offered by Self and Family Managed Care.

Hospitals

Be aware that the most common causes of seniors' admissions to hospitals are falls and adverse drug reactions (blood thinners caused 12.6%). There are excellent fall prevention programs in the community. If your parent is on multiple medications make an appointment with the pharmacist to discuss medication safety.

Avoid emergency departments unless you are hoping for admission to the hospital. In Winnipeg, Misericordia Urgent Care, an Access Centre or a walk-in is a better choice. MyRightCare.ca will help you choose the correct facility, its hours and location.

Be particularly alert in hospitals. Doctors rotate between wards every couple of

Enjoy your food: Committing to cooking healthier



By Carla D'Andreamatteo, RD, MSc www.thefoodlady.ca

The situation: You've decided to commit to eating healthier. In an effort to make this happen, you decide to adjust recipes to include "healthier" ingredients. You decide to use whole wheat flour, omit the sugar and salt, use applesauce instead of fat, etc. These adjustments have all been rumored to make a recipe healthier, so this will all work out great. You gleefully apply these new adjustments to a muffin recipe!

The fantasy: These new high fibre, low fat, no sugar muffins are tasty, moist, and unlike any muffin you have tasted before.

The reality: These muffins are tasteless, dry, rubbery in texture, and unlike any muffin you have tasted before. Sadly, your family members will never let you live this one down.

Oh dear. Now what? Here are some tried and tested recipe adjustments that will truly aim to improve the nutritional value and yield an enjoyable product!

Reduce, eliminate, replace

When adjusting a recipe to improve the nutritional value, consider the following approaches:

- **REDUCE** the quantity of any items that are considered less healthy
- **ELIMINATE** any items that are less healthy and not required
- **REPLACE** a less healthy item with something that is either lower in fat, sugar, or sodium

When considering the options above, make only one or two modifications to a recipe at one time. Taste the revised recipe and determine if the change was successful before embarking on further adjustments. Too many changes at once may create a very unpleasant end product.

Recipe adjustments to improve health typically target sugar, fat, salt and dietary fibre. Based on these four ingredients, I have compiled a list of credible modifications to try with your recipes.

Sugar

- Sugar in a recipe can be cut by 1/3 without significantly altering the end product. Do not be tricked into thinking that switching to honey or another "natural" sugar will equate to creating a healthier product. The body recognizes sugar as sugar whether it is honey, brown sugar, etc. If you are using less sugar that counts towards an improvement.
- If reducing the sugar amount called for in a recipe, consider adding dried fruit to enhance the sweetness. This change will contribute to increasing the amount of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fibre.
- Using sweet spices (ex. cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger) will enhance the sweetness of a recipe. Add or increase the amount of these spices in a recipe if you are reducing the sugar content.

Fat

- Typically less fat is needed when using liquid oil (ex. canola oil) instead of a solid fat (ex. margarine, butter). Fat adjustments for switching from a solid fat (melted) to a liquid oil:
 - 1 cup (250 mL) solid fat 3/4 cup (175 mL) liquid oil
 - 1/2 cup (125 mL) solid fat 1/3 cup (75 mL) liquid oil
 - 1 Tbsp (15 mL) solid fat 2 tsp (10 mL) liquid oil
- Use heart healthy oil (canola, olive, sunflower, soybean) in place of solid fat (shortening, lard).
- 1% milk can be used in place of 2% or whole milk.
- Heavy cream can be replaced in equal volume with evaporated skim milk.
- 1 egg can be replaced with either of these options:
 - 2 egg whites
 - 1 Tbsp ground flax seed mixed with 3 Tbsp water
- Nuts provide heart healthy fat. To reduce



Did you know?

Serving a dessert that has been heated will taste sweeter on the tongue than if served cold or at room temperature.

the total fat in a recipe, roasting nuts will enhance the flavor and allow for reducing the amount of nuts by 50%.

- Applesauce, pureed prunes, or pureed pumpkin (when appropriate for the recipe flavor) can be used to replace 1/2 of the fat in muffin recipes. This modification will likely decrease the cooking time.

Salt

- You can cut salt completely from recipes (except yeast leavened recipes).
- Season foods with fresh or dried herbs, spices, garlic, onions, peppers and lemon or lime juice to add flavor.
- Select "powder" versions of salts (ex. garlic powder, onion powder) to provide the flavor without the sodium.

Fibre

- A recipe that calls for white flour can be replaced by one of the following options:
 - 50% white flour and 50% whole wheat flour or 75% white flour and 25% ground flax seed

Trial and error is an important aspect of recipe adjusting. I make notes on the recipe itself identifying the changes I made. The tips provided will help with your endeavor to eat healthier. Enjoy your food! **B**

Carla D'Andreamatteo owns and operates a nutrition consulting company, The Food Lady, since 1999. Based in Winnipeg, the team of dietitians offers a variety of nutrition services provincially and nationally.



Protein powered hummus

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 35 min

Makes: 2 1/2 servings

It's always fun to sneak in a secret ingredient - this one is an egg! Protein satisfies a hungry bunch and this twist on an old favourite is a perfect way to do it. Serve hummus with crispy bread or raw veggies for an easy lunch. Canola oil's neutral flavour lets the lively tastes of cilantro, chipotle chili and cumin step to the fore.

- 1 can (15-oz/426 ml) no salt added chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 4 large hard-boiled eggs, divided
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) canola oil
- 3 medium garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 medium chipotle chili pepper (packed in adobo sauce)
- 3 tbsp (45 ml) fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) ground cumin
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) chopped cilantro, divided
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) water

Directions:

1. In food processor, combine chickpeas, 3 hard-boiled eggs, canola oil, garlic, pepper, lemon juice, cumin and all but 1 tbsp (15 ml) cilantro. Purée until smooth, adding up to 1/3 cup (75 ml) water for desired consistency.
2. In shallow serving bowl, add hummus. Slice remaining egg into wedges and garnish with remaining 1 tbsp (15 ml) cilantro.

Per serving (3 tbsp / 45 ml): Calories 80, Protein 4 g, Total Fat 5 g, Saturated Fat 1 g, Cholesterol 60 mg, Carbohydrates 5 g, Fibre 1 g, Sugars 0 g, Added sugar 0 g, Sodium 35 mg, Potassium 78 mg

Recipe and photo provided by CanolaInfo.org



Edamame & roasted red pepper spread

Prep time: 10 min

Makes: 4 servings

This versatile and slightly chunky spread can be kept in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. Serve with whole wheat pita wedges.

- 1 bag (500 g/1 lb) frozen shelled edamame (soy beans), thawed
- 250 mL (1 cup) sliced roasted red peppers
- 45 mL (3 tbsp) light mayonnaise
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) chopped fresh basil or parsley
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Directions:

In food processor, purée edamame until almost smooth. Add peppers and mayonnaise and purée until smooth and combined. Stir in basil and garlic.

Per serving (2 tbsp / 25 ml): Calories 25, Protein 2 g, Total fat 1 g, Saturated fat 0 g, Dietary cholesterol 0 mg, Carbohydrate 2 g, Dietary fibre 1 g, Sugars 1 g, Added sugars 0 g, Sodium 40 mg, Potassium 80 mg

Recipe developed by Emily Richards, P.H. Ec. © 2009, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Reproduced with permission from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. <http://www.heartandstroke.ca/recipes>



Powerhouse green smoothie

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 0 min

Makes: 1 serving

Start your day strong with an all-in-one meal. Smoothies fit the bill pre- or post-workout because they are quick and easy to make.

- 3/4 cup (175 ml) seedless green grapes
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) ripe banana slices
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) chopped kale
- 2/3 cup (150 ml) non-fat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 1/2 tsp (7 ml) canola oil
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) ice cubes

Directions:

In blender, combine all ingredients. Blend for about 30 seconds to 1 minute or until desired smoothness is achieved.

Per serving (1 cup / 400 ml): Calories 290, Protein 17 g, Total Fat 7 g, Saturated Fat 0.5 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Carbohydrates 42 g, Fibre 3 g, Total sugars 31 g, Added sugars 0 g, Sodium 75 mg, Potassium 502 mg

Recipe and photo provided by CanolaInfo.org

Yoga practice: Feeling the strain of the hamstrings



By Tally Young

We have the ability to hop, leap, jump and skip. Movement begins when you wake up and journeys with you throughout your day, one movement at a time. How we move creates a pattern through our various tissues, which impacts the movement structure of our body. Most of that movement impacts the hamstrings.

Hamstrings are a common problem area. Proper sitting requires us to use our sits bones (ischial tuberosities) for the purposes of keeping our alignment. Over time and practice, the average human sits for about 8-12 hours a day. This causes the muscles of the pelvic area to tire and we end up sitting mainly on our hamstrings, which will cause our muscles throughout the thigh to tighten up which impacts so many other interwoven groups of tissue and fascia throughout our bodies as well creating an imbalance throughout joints like our hips and knees.

When moving into a yoga practice, we often feel the strain of the hamstrings. Folding forward feels like you are being ripped right up the back of the legs. You fear that you may actually fracture if the posture lasts anymore than about 2 breaths. You begin to sweat and make deals in your brain with yourself that if your insane yoga instructor stops the insanity within the next two breaths you won't physically feed them to the bison on the range.

You make it through, and all is good. But in the back of your head your wobbly legs are saying, "just wait till next time". You internally groan and make silent excuses on why you should skip your next class. Sound familiar?

There is a trick to opening the hamstring. You need a ball and about 20 minutes prior to your next yoga class to open up the facial tightening that is restricting your movement. The ball needs to be sturdy



enough to lay on. Tennis ball or therapy ball, not something soft. Get familiar with your hip, the rounded area at the side of the body below the ribcage, this is known as the ilium. Roll the ball around the hip then let it fall and press firmly on the inside of the hip bone (ilium). Now you are familiar with the area we would like to target.

Lie on your belly and place the ball in that same space you had just found. Roll around. I mean all around. Up, down, side to side. You will be feeling sensations that will be, well, painful. If the sensations are deeply unpleasant in the laying position, stand up and move the pelvis at the wall; this should take off some of the pressure. If truly unbearable, do not do. You want this action for about 3 min on each side of the hip.

Then lie on your back and lift your buttocks (glutes). Place the ball anywhere under one side of the bum cheek. Roll from side to side, up and down on one cheek at a time. Again 3 minutes a side.

Stand up and place the ball under the foot and into the arch. Press all around.

Place under the foot just behind the toes and again press all around moving side to side. Then place it directly on the heel and place the toes on the floor, kind of like you are wearing a high heel. Press and roll, slowly. Do this for 3 minutes a foot.

Now lets move into the hamstrings. Stand with your back at the wall. Place your bum on the wall and have your feet a little wider than hip distance apart, toes forward. Take each foot forward from the wall about 10 – 12 inches. Move into an inhale breathe and lift from your heart towards the ceiling, exhale, press the belly button to the spine and roll forward from your hip joint. Fold your arms and grab your elbows to allow your head to softly hang from your shoulders.

Notice the space increasing through the legs. Make your exhale longer with each breath to make the stretch extend a little further each time. Try to make this posture about 10 – 20 breaths at first, increasing with practice.

Then jump joyously to notice the spring in your step. **B**



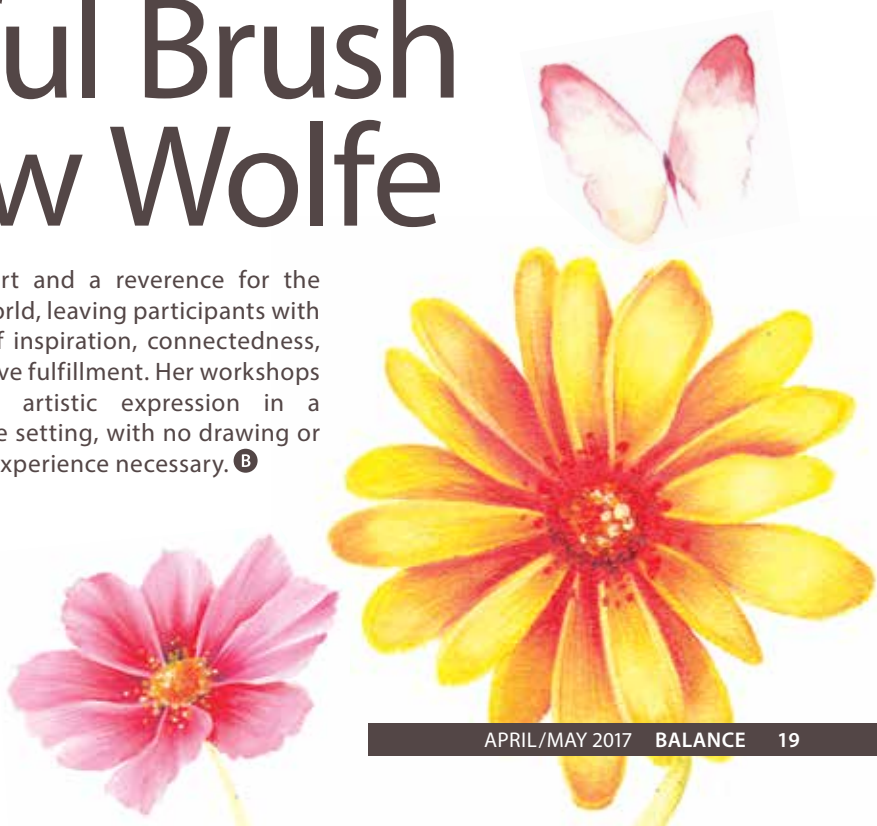
New programming now being offered: **The Mindful Brush with Willow Wolfe**

Get in touch with your creative spirit for a sense of wellness.

In this workshop, Willow guides you step-by-step as you complete your very own work of art. Gentle guidance and the building of skills ensure that those who have never before touched a brush feel successful in their artistic endeavors.

Creative expression is a crucial aspect of our connection to others, promoting feelings of accomplishment and overall well-being. Willow brings a focus to

mindful art and a reverence for the natural world, leaving participants with a sense of inspiration, connectedness, and creative fulfillment. Her workshops focus on artistic expression in a supportive setting, with no drawing or painting experience necessary. **B**





Give your time so they can shine!

In just a few short months, Manitoba will be hosting the hottest athletic event in the country, the 2017 Canada Summer Games. From July 28-August 13th, Winnipeg will welcome more than 4,000 athletes and coaches, 400 media and broadcasters, 500 officials and over 20,000 visitors from across Canada.

Not only is this the 50th anniversary of the Canada Games, but all eyes will be on Winnipeg as the country celebrates Canada's 150th birthday, so this is an enormous opportunity to showcase our city and inspire local pride.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society also sees this as an excellent opportunity to profile Manitoba teachers and their expertise around encouraging healthy, active living among our future athletes. Therefore The Manitoba Teachers' Society is a proud sponsor of the Canada Summer Games.

"Teachers are often the life-blood of so many community projects," says MTS President Norm Gould. "Young athletes already know that teachers have their backs. This is a further demonstration of our commitment to these talented young people in every city and town across Manitoba."

The Canada Games will be using over 20 venues across Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. The construction of new legacy facilities such as the Bison Butte Mountain Bike Course at Fort Whyte Alive will leave behind a world class track that is the first of its kind in a city of Winnipeg's

size and will be enjoyed by generations of future mountain bike enthusiasts. The course is a series of interlocking trails suitable for all levels of mountain biking and includes berms, a pump track, rock gardens and table tops.

While these facilities will provide Canada's athletes with world class conditions where they will be able to showcase their skills, it will be the Canada Games volunteers who give these facilities their heart and soul.

The Canada Games estimates that 6,000 volunteers are required. To date, thousands of Manitobans - including hundreds of Manitoba teachers - have registered to volunteer their time, but more are still required to make the games a success.

"The Canada Games is committed to building capacity today and tomorrow by engaging current leaders to develop and mentor those who come next," says Gould, "And The Manitoba Teachers' Society is dedicated to promoting wellness opportunities in and outside the classroom."

"We all know that Manitoba's athletes' paths to success start with the support and guidance of their teachers, both in the classroom and on the playing field, so please give your time this summer so they can shine."

If you have time to give, please consider registering to volunteer your time by visiting the Canada Games website at <http://www.2017canadagames.ca/en/content/give-your-time-so-they-can-shine>.



BALANCE
mind body spirit
THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

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