

BALANCE



WELLNESS MAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

MARCH 2018 | VOLUME 3 | NUMBER 3

2018 & Beyond

Using Awareness to
Build Resilience,
Prevent Burnout &
Bolster Mental Health

Remember When Trying
Something New was Fun?

Different Types of
Disorganization

Dispelling Vocal
Myths (Part 1)

Setting Up Your
Office to be Active

Practicing Active
Listening Skills

editor's MESSAGE



Remember when trying something new was fun?

Remember when trying something new was fun and exciting? As a young child our natural instinct was to explore; there was no fear of failure, only a desire to try everything to the dismay of our watchful parents. It was how we learned to jump, to climb, and to experience the world at our fingertips. Over time we can lose this sense of adventure. Our thoughts may stand in the way of our opportunities to try something new. We can get comfortable with our routine, and we may tend to cling to what we know is safe. In a previous issue of Balance I wrote about watching a child skipping down the street and had wondered at what point in our life we chose to stop skipping, as this young girl looked so free and natural in her movements.

What is your earliest memory of trying something new? As we head into spring I am sharing the thought of remembering what it was like to be a kid. Try to remember what it was like to play in the snow for the first time or catch a snowflake on your tongue. The fun and excitement of these small activities can be captured as an adult when we open our mind and schedules to try something new.

With that being said we will use this as an opportunity to connect with the diversity of wellness programming members have access to through the Balance program. The Manitoba Teachers' Society's wellness program has expanded tremendously over the past few years to encompass a wide variety of programming. We encourage you to flip through the magazine, and maybe read an article you might have passed up in the past. Or, when having the option of different breakout sessions, choose something you know you will love, and maybe another you have always thought about trying, but never had the time, the energy or the confidence to join in.

Through Balance we take pride in being able to offer a range of wellness topics, and hope that our readers can each find something within these pages or a presenter they can connect with. If there is something you are looking for, and don't see, reach out to Balance and share your thoughts on wellness topics that are of importance to our members.

Robyn Braha
Wellness Coordinator



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society



BALANCE
mind body spirit
THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

MARCH 2018, VOLUME 3, NUMBER 3

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Published four times a year (September – June) by The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Articles and views published herein do not necessarily represent the policies nor the views of the Society.

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PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT

40063378

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Information Management
The Manitoba Teachers' Society
191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2
email: mts-im@mbteach.org



Canadian
Educational
Press
Association



“When things appear to be overwhelming, remind yourself that you don’t have to accomplish everything all at once. Take things at your own pace and trust in the perfect unfolding of your life”.

– Keith Macpherson

Vocal hygiene:

6

Dispelling vocal myths (Part 1)

in this ISSUE

- 4 2018 and beyond
- 6 Vocal hygiene: Dispelling vocal myths (Part 1)
- 7 Financial literacy: Calculating multiple streams of income
- 8 Posture issues: Combating tension headaches
- 10 Wellbeing in the workplace
- 12 Keith’s corner: Practicing active listening skills
- 13 A practical guide for caregivers: Oh brother! Sibling rivalry
- 14 Setting up your office to be active
- 15 Clarity over clutter: Different types of disorganization
- 16 Nutrition column
- 17 Recipes for healthy living
- 18 The wind relieving pose
- 19 Finding your truth. What makes you happy?



Recipes for
healthy living 17





2018 and Beyond

*Using awareness to build resilience,
prevent burnout & bolster mental health*



By **Shannon Gander** www.lifeworkwellness.ca

As Spring gets underway, it is not uncommon for people to lift their heads and take note of the longer daylight, to pause, reset and refresh. In many ways, I prefer this to the pressure of resolutions that come with the New Year. I like the alternative of taking small actions that have beneficial and lasting positive effects.

As we ease further into 2018, I want to encourage you to have your mental health on your radar as you continue with your usual work-life demands which I imagine as educators can at times feel

like stepping on a treadmill without an off button.

When I speak on the topic of mental health awareness I am often asked by audience participants, “what can I do to protect my mental health and avoid burnout?” This is a great question! People are often surprised to learn that it’s not the big actions that make the most difference. In fact, it’s the little day-to-day habits that matter most. I call these ‘small investments for big pay offs’.

On the question of how to protect our mental health - when we take care of

our physical body through nourishing ourselves well and being active, without question, this supports our mental wellness. In this article though, rather than focus on what is fairly common knowledge, I want to get you thinking about your daily routine and habits. Specifically, ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour that contribute to mental well-being.

Let’s start with awareness

Awareness is a key skill (we all have it and can all grow it) - it helps us to see

how we are doing. It requires us to be open, to be curious without judgment so that we can identify what we need to do differently to navigate our day-to-day stress.

Awareness isn't just about what we can see in ourselves, it is about being open to what others may share about what they are observing in us. Lorraine Fox, a guru in burnout prevention in the field of child and youth care says the following: "give yourself the gift of turning yourself to someone you trust who will be honest with you about what they see because we can't always see ourselves clearly, especially if we are headed down the path of burnout."

It is humbling and often difficult to witness behaviours in ourselves that we don't like to see that may occur when we are feeling stressed out. If we can't see them or allow others to tell us, then we will have nothing to work on and it is hard then to get to a better place. Accepting "what is", if you are willing, is a healthy starting place for making small changes.

Identify all-or-nothing thinking

Do you have a pattern of running yourself ragged saying, "I will be fine because I'm going on holidays in three weeks?" Or, do you push yourself all week long, saving all of your downtime for the weekend? Downtime on weekends and vacation is fabulous and can be very reenergizing. At the same time, this can be a pattern that works, until it doesn't. Resilience to burnout is not about enduring, rather is built through taking brief pauses throughout the day. This helps our nervous system recover from our acute stress response (essentially helping us recover from the stress hormones – cortisol and adrenaline, that get dumped into our system). It's important to find moments throughout the day where we pause, breathe, and ground ourselves so that we can continue on. This helps our brain say, "all right, we can do this".

Be aware of your choice points

Have you ever noticed that our body is often trying to get us to pay attention to its needs and we disregard its attempt at getting us to engage in an act of self-care? Some examples are as simple as basic needs: to go to

the bathroom, to eat, a short break to replenish, or sleep. Disregarding our body is most often self-imposed (such as staying up too late when we are tired, denying our hunger signals, etc) rather than something others are doing "to" us.

I am always encouraging clients to pay attention to these choice points (using their awareness) to identify and be mindful to these moments so that they can make the choice that is better for them in the current moment. Why? Because when we repeatedly disregard our body's needs, we are also disregarding our mental health. So the next time your body is trying to get your attention, see if you can make the choice that supports your well-being. We can occasionally bypass a need and be totally fine, we just don't want to make this a pattern.

Pay attention to your cognitive load

I love technology - the idea that we can instantly connect to a friend across the world and have a "facetime" conversation is amazing to me. We can all however benefit from paying attention to the impact that technology has on us. The latest research shows that our brains were not designed for the cognitive load they are currently carrying. Meaning, when we spend our evenings moving from one technological device to another (computer, to cell phone, to TV, etc) - it is hard on us.

If, for instance, you leave your phone on to alert you every time that you have a message, your brain will thank you if you choose small pockets of time in the evening where you turn this off (e.g. over dinner hour, while relaxing or engaging with others, etc.). Most importantly, if you are using your phone as your alarm clock and tend to check it once you have gone to bed for the night, please bring back the old alarm clock into your sleeping routine repertoire. Why? Once your nervous system has determined that you are readying yourself for sleep, it is onboard - until the phone emits a buzz or musical sound. Then it activates and prepares for something to happen. Not really what we are looking for when we want to drift off or go back to sleep.

I am not suggesting a radical

change in anyone's lifestyle as it relates to technology. Instead, use your awareness to notice your current habits. If you have an opportunity to do any training or practice in mindfulness, take it! It helps decrease our cognitive load by quieting our mind, a beautiful thing for our mental health.

Some symptoms that resilience may be low (symptoms can vary but are important to pay attention to):

- Working too much or too little (at work or home)
- Experiencing irritability & agitation/ low tolerance
- Socially isolating self (in a way that is not usual for you)
- Feeling emotional and physical exhaustion (even if have slept)
- Self-medicating or soothing with alcohol, drugs, food, (escaping through shopping, internet surfing, too much screen time)
- Your emotions feel more at the surface than usual
- Feeling easily overwhelmed
- Feeling as though you are constantly doing things but it's 'never enough' and you spend energy worrying about disappointing people

If you are feeling less resilient than you would like to be or somewhat burnt-out, this is not irreparable! It means that you have to ease off a little and ask yourself what you think you need (and it's okay if you don't know). Pay attention to the areas you have some control over. It may mean having to change some current patterns that are contributing to your stress and above all, giving yourself permission to **reach out and ask for help**.

If this is difficult for you to do for yourself, I would encourage you to consider someone you love who cares about you and needs you to be well (a family member, friend, or pet) harness their energy to take steps to protect your mental health. Another option is to follow the wisdom of Kristin Neff who has researched and launched mindfulness self-compassion – one of the most powerful programs for improving self-worth. She recommends that you imagine what you would tell a friend in the exact situation that you are in right now. Then act on that.

Vocal hygiene: Dispelling vocal myths (Part 1)



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

Whisper if your throat is sore because it will help save your voice. Never go without a throat lozenge! As a speech-language pathologist (SLP), I hear lots of ideas from my clients about how to deal with voice difficulties. Unfortunately, many of them are myths that, not only may not help, but may actually make their voices worse in the long run. In today's article, we will discuss some of these vocal myths and the science, if any, behind them.

Myth 1: "Whispering will save your voice"

When hit with a bout of laryngitis or a sore throat, teachers often resort to whispering in order to continue on with their responsibilities at school and home. When whispering, there is typically no voicing (and no vibration of the vocal folds) so how could this be harmful?

Unfortunately, there is more that goes into making a healthy voice than just the vocal folds. Studies have shown that the majority of adults, when whispering, use excessive muscular effort. This can create a hyper functional voice disorder that will only serve to make your current voice difficulties worse. In addition, when you whisper you are forcing air through partially closed vocal folds which can be very drying.

Solution: Zip it or use a confidential voice

If you have significant voice loss, ideally you will simply rest your voice – meaning no talking! This can be challenging for almost anyone, let alone a teacher. If you must use your voice, try talking in a "confidential voice" instead of a whisper. A confidential voice is a soft, easy, breathy voice. One we might use to

tell someone a secret. It should feel easy and be at a low volume. Because of the type of voice produced, you will need to be within arms reach of your listener for them to hear you. This is for short term use only and provides you with modified voice rest.

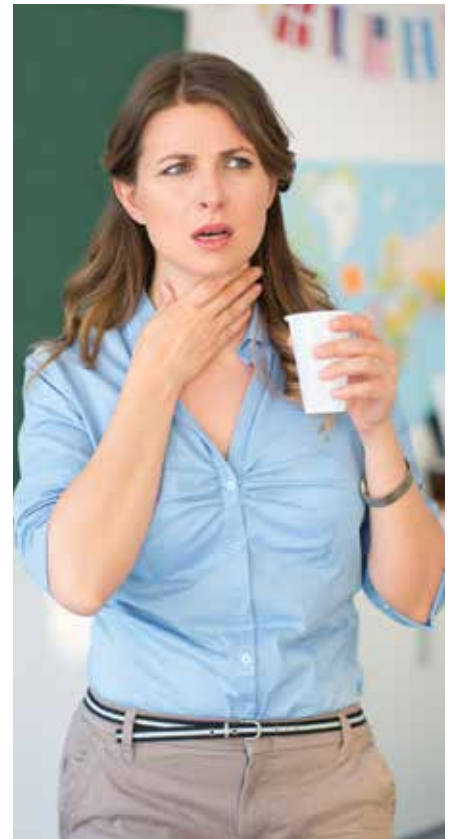
Myth 2: "As soon as I lose my voice, I live on throat lozenges"

Many teachers tell me that as soon as they have a sore throat or rough voice, they never go without their throat lozenge. "I take a deep breath in and I can feel the lozenge cooling my throat". "That way I don't have to drink water all day long – the cough candy keeps my throat moist."

As with most quick fixes, there are some major downsides to using throat lozenges and they have to do with the specific ingredients they are made of. The vast majority of throat lozenges or cough candies contain menthol which may numb the pain in your throat. The problem is that the discomfort you are feeling is being caused by an underlying problem and by numbing the pain, you risk doing even more damage to your voice. Menthol is also very drying to the delicate tissues in your mouth and throat. As you'll remember from previous Balance articles, one of the most important things you can do for your voice is to keep hydrated. Drying out the structures of the vocal tract puts them at more risk for injury.

Solution: Lots of fluids and read the ingredients

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. One of the best things you can do to baby your voice is to drink fluids – ideally water but any non-caffeinated beverage will do. This can be challenging in the classroom



when bathroom breaks are limited. Try preloading early in the morning, sipping on water during the day and then loading up again in the evening.

If you do want to use a lozenge, read the ingredients carefully. Avoid lozenges with drying ingredients such as menthol and eucalyptus. If you can, find ones which contain glycerin, which is a lubricant for your vocal folds. That said, using lozenges should not replace fluid consumption!

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.

Financial literacy: Calculating multiple streams of income



By Brian Denysuik, Creditaid www.creditaid.ca

In today's world there are many of us that have what I will call multiple streams of income. This can come from different sources, such as two or three part-time jobs versus one full time job. It can include a second job throughout the summer months, a side business or a combination of receiving a pension and working part-time.

When we have multiple streams of income we need to keep in mind that we will most likely be under taxed. Each stream of income is calculated separately so you, as the income earner, need to think this through very carefully so that you don't end up with a great big tax bill when you file your personal income tax.

In January of each year create a quick plan summarizing all the different streams of income you will have during the year. The easiest way to do this is by using the last pay statements in December for each of the income streams you had.

Create a spreadsheet with the following titles: Employer / Gross Income / Income Tax / CPP / EI / Net Income.

Once you have all the details summarized with totals for each category you can then calculate what the actual amount of Tax, CPP & EI should be using the grand totals. The total income will be taxed at a higher bracket than it was by each employer.

The easiest way to determine what the real numbers will be is to use the CRA Payroll Deductions online calculator. It can be found at: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/esrvc-srvce/tx/bsnss/pdoc-eng.html>

Take the total income and divide it by 12 to get a monthly average. Select the payroll frequency as "monthly" and enter it. The next steps are very well explained and you will arrive at what will look like



a pay statement. Take the number for the federal and provincial taxes and multiply it by 12 and record this number underneath the income tax number on your spread sheet. Do the same for CPP and EI. The difference between all three categories is the extra income tax, CPP and EI that you will likely have to pay when you file your income tax.

You are now prepared and aware of what will be owing. Now that you have this knowledge you can do a few things. You can ask one of your employers to deduct a specific amount of "extra tax" off each pay. This will repeat each pay period and be remitted to CRA. If you prefer you can also do this yourself by doing a monthly bill payment to CRA using your social insurance number as

your account number. Another option is to put this amount away in a savings account and earn interest until you need to pay your income taxes once they have been filed.

Keep in mind, if you have had a large amount owing when you did file your tax return, you will be informed by CRA on your "Notice of Assessment" if you are required to make monthly or quarterly tax installments.

If you have questions or concerns about what you need to do, make sure you call your accountant to clarify.

Brian Denysuik is a local credit counsellor and registered insolvency counsellor at Creditaid who has been in the financial services industry for over 35 years.



Posture issues: Combating tension headaches



By **Chelsea White, BSc (Kin), C.A.T (c)**

We have all been there at the end of the day and sometimes in the morning; that nagging tension headache. You may find yourself rubbing your temples and the back of your neck trying to get some relief. There are many reasons some are more susceptible to tension headaches than others. Dehydration, hours spent in front of a computer screen, fluorescent lights and in particular our posture will contribute to tension headaches. And then there are the events in life beyond our control; injuries to the neck or upper body that can leave us with the aftermath of pain and headaches. There are things in life we can control and the things we cannot, but there are exercises and tools that we can utilize to aid in combating tension headaches and give some relief.

Hydration

Hydration, are you drinking enough water? The general recommendation for an adult is to drink 6-8 cups of water during the day. This does not always account for the water we lose from activity. Many of us have been there, we have done some activity and in the rush to continue on with our day we forget to up our water intake. Fast forward to later in the day or the the next morning and our head is pounding, and then we are pounding the water. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure as they say, so try putting the water where the mouth is by increasing your intake prior to, during and after activity. Some general rules of thumb: try to drink 1.5-2 cups of water 1-2 hours before activity and 2-3 cups of water after activity.

Posture

Here we are again posturing, our nemesis and ally, technology. The unfortunate thing is that technology, be it computer (particularly laptops),

tablets or phones place us in a undesirable position; rounding of our mid back, shoulders and excessive flexion of the neck (the slumpy posture). This position places tension on the muscles that connect our neck and head called the suboccipitals, they control our head tilt (backwards), rotation and side bending. When under too much tension they can also be responsible for tension headaches, creating a pain around the side of the head to the eyes. There are many thing that can be done to relieve the tension and discomfort. The first being changing our postural habits: being mindful of our body position when working at the computer or tablets. Ideally our spine should be in a neutral position: slight extension curve in the low back, mid back relatively straight and the neck neutral with a slight chin tuck. Now this position isn't always achievable with tablets, laptops and phones. So try taking intermittent breaks to perform a counter movement of extension through the neck and upper back. Standing up or sitting, clasp your hands and place them behind your head, squeeze your shoulder blades together, look up to the ceiling and take 3-5 deep breaths. You can also try tucking your chin while your hands are behind your head to activate your deep neck flexors which commonly become inhibited with prolonged neck flexion (looking down).

Stretching

For the pound of cure, or at least some relief from the tension headache here are some things to try. You can release some of the tension in the muscle at the base of the head by trying a self-release technique. You can use your hand or a small ball (tennis or lacrosse), place the ball or your hand (fingers or thumb) at



There are many reasons some are more susceptible to tension headaches than others. Dehydration, hours spent in front of a computer screen, fluorescent lights and in particular our posture will contribute to tension headaches. And then there are the events in life beyond our control; injuries to the neck or upper body that can leave us with the aftermath of pain and headaches.

the base of your head, where the skull ends and the softer muscular area begins, just off to the side of your spine, apply a mild pressure and perform a chin tuck (like you are making a double chin) and feel your head slide up the hand. You can also apply a mild pressure to the area of tension and hold for 30-60 seconds. As a compliment to the above you can use the ball to release the tension in the upper traps (the bulky muscle between your neck and shoulder) by placing the ball against the wall and applying pressure and holding as above. In addition to the above, stretching your chest muscles in the doorway will be helpful as tight chest muscles can pull the shoulders forward, contributing to poor posture. In a door frame place your forearm against the door frame with the elbow bent to 90 degrees, bringing your shoulder blade back and down, step forward through the door, you should feel a gentle stretch across the chest. When in doubt, posture check, stretch, take a breath and break from the slumpy life.



Wellbeing in the workplace



By Marianne Farag, *Sublimity: Pathways to Peace*

When it comes to the workplace, let's face it, we've all at one time or another come across individuals or groups of people that we experience as difficult, unpleasant, or challenging to deal with. Sometimes we can roll with it and not let the situation get to us; at other times, perhaps not so much. And some are better than others at coping with interpersonal stress in the workplace. When we experience triggers that push our buttons at work, we may start to feel emotions such as anger, resentment,

fear, demoralization, or victimhood. More likely than not, our physical health will also be impacted: it could manifest through a variety of signs such as: indigestion, clenching of the fists, poor sleep, hypertension, headaches and so forth.

Then there is the mental chatter that we engage in, thinking it will relieve our tension: we find ourselves talking about a particular person/situation at practically every coffee and lunch break; and even after the work day has ended we may find ourselves

obsessing about who said what, who did what, playing it back over and over again to ourselves and any willing audience. Been there, done that?

It's difficult isn't it to keep our balance when someone says or does something at work that offends us or that we think is unfair or uncalled for. In the face of people or situations at work that ruffle our feathers, it can sometimes be a real challenge to cope in a way that maintains our mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing. Why is that? Essentially, it's about our ego.

Now ego typically gets a bad rap and is perceived as basically bad and needing to be eradicated for one's wellbeing. I take a different view, seeing both "positive" and "negative" aspects to ego and more importantly recognizing that without the ego we would not exist in a human form! The ego is the "I", the "Self", the thinking and feeling you. Ego is what gives us conscious awareness of ourselves and the world that is external to us. When functioning in a "positive" way, ego gives us the ability to be self-aware, to grow and evolve, to aspire to achieve goals, to turn ideas into action, to be creative, and to protect ourselves from danger.

When we have an exaggerated sense of self importance and a feeling of superiority to other people or when we feel inferior to others, that's when "negative" ego behaviour comes into play. How it works is that we let our sense of self importance or insecurities become the lens through which we interpret everything said or done to us. Experiencing through that lens, we tend to be quick to take offense, to take issue with whatever is said or done in our presence; we tend to interpret what others say and do as an intentional arrow or attack aimed at us.

Consequently, we respond defensively or aggressively. Hence we bring about conflict in our interactions with each other because we are reacting from our "negative ego". Ever vigilant, on the lookout for offenses directed its way, ego reacts instinctively, out of habit with one form or another of defense. Although we are creatures of habit, the good news is, we can choose to change our routines. If your current approach to workplace tensions, conflicts, and disagreements aren't yielding the results you seek, then you can learn new approaches. So how exactly can you cultivate the habit of keeping your ego in balance?

Practicing self-reflection and self-discipline

Some practices that you can pursue to shift the grip of a "negative" ego habit include the following:

- When you are triggered, see

this as an opportunity for self-reflection instead of an immediate response. Not all situations call for an immediate response/decision. Instead of reacting in the moment, sleep on it by taking what someone says or does under advisement, as a way to give yourself the space to get to the root cause of your trigger and to consider things from a calmer state.

- Reminding yourself that, "everything is not always about you"! More often than not how someone communicates and behaves reflects on them and their issues/needs. Let that be a mantra that helps you unlearn the habit of not taking things personally.
- Take up the regular practice of Mindfulness/Meditation. Even if five or ten minutes in the morning, the evening and during a lunch/coffee break are devoted to such a practice, it will, over time, re-educate the ego and build new habits within you. You'll find that Mindfulness/Meditation can be a big help to getting your ego in a calmer, unstressed state.
- When you find yourself struggling to let go of incessant fixation on a situation/person that has triggered you, make a conscious effort to shift your thoughts - interrupt your thinking - to any topic, however mundane, that brings a smile to your face.
- Even if (and you will!) stumble and fall into the trap of "negative" ego, don't discount the impact of your new awareness; so even catching yourself after the fact, is progress in that you are observing your behaviour with a new lens.

When you take ownership of your workday experience and increase your capacity to maintain your ego in balance, you contribute to a ripple effect. By that I mean, when we each work on increasing our ability to manage our egos, bit by bit, a new norm is established which transforms the workplace environment into one that we experience as much healthier psychologically. With this understanding of the ego dynamic, when faced with confrontation and disruptive behaviours in the



Now ego typically gets a bad rap and is perceived as basically bad and needing to be eradicated for one's wellbeing. I take a different view, seeing both "positive" and "negative" aspects to ego and more importantly recognizing that without the ego we would not exist in a human form! The ego is the "I", the "Self", the thinking and feeling you. Ego is what gives us conscious awareness of ourselves and the world that is external to us. When functioning in a "positive" way, ego gives us the ability to be self-aware, to grow and evolve, to aspire to achieve goals, to turn ideas into action, to be creative, and to protect ourselves from danger.

workplace, you can choose to not get swept up in other people's dramas, and you can choose to not create drama yourself, but rather, to de-escalate "negative" ego behaviour. Transform yourself and you transform not only your experience, but that of others as well!

And do remember, we are a work in progress. So, if at times it feels like you are taking one step forward and two steps back, at least stop to praise yourself for the awareness and self-reflection you are doing regarding your thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour. The rest will follow in the fullness of time with commitment and discipline.

Marianne Farag is an Inner-Peace Specialist with Sublimity: Pathways to Peace.

Keith's corner:

Practicing active listening skills



By Keith Macpherson www.keithmacpherson.ca

I recently sat down to have dinner with my wife after a busy day at work. As I sat down at the dinner table, my stomach was grumbling and my mind was sorting out all the unfinished tasks on my, "to do list". Although it appeared that I was present, in my mind I was still sitting at my desk doing paperwork.

I immediately began eating the delicious food that my wife had prepared and within the span of a minute, I was already half way through finishing my meal. Upon noticing this, my wife suggested that I slow down and enjoy the meal.

As soon as she made the suggestion, I immediately felt myself becoming agitated. I hadn't eaten since noon and coming off a busy day at work, I was not feeling up for suggestions on how to eat my meal. I took a few deep breaths and began to realize that my wife was right. I was not paying attention in the moment. I was not tasting the delicious food and savouring each bite.

Such is the way for many of us as we rush our way through the world and rarely take the moments to slow down and savour this life we are experiencing. I thanked my wife for reminding me of this important lesson in learning how to listen and appreciate the present moment.

Following the meal, I started noticing how this pattern of mental distraction was further affecting me in many of the conversations I was having throughout my day. While participating in conversations with others, I found myself drifting off into mental distractions instead of being fully present in the moment. As a result, I was missing out on opportunities to meaningfully connect and truly hear



what the other person was speaking to me about in conversation.

From a mindfulness perspective it is important to begin practicing active listening skills to assist in expanding our awareness of the present moment and to help us come into balance. A direct outcome that emerges from active listening is that we begin to realize everything we actually need is found in the present moment. When we slow down enough to truly listen to the present moment, all the answers that we are looking for in our lives, suddenly appear. Whether it is the perfect person that has the right inspiration we need to hear or simply the enjoyment of a nourishing meal that helps us relax and digest our day, it is only by way of focusing in with intentional attention that we are given exactly what we need in each moment.

Practicing active listening

Here are a few suggestions to get you back on track with practicing active listening in your own life.

1. Taste your meals! Turn off all distractions including your phone, the television and newspapers while eating and focus on tasting each bite of your meal.
2. Intentionally set out to listen more than you speak in each conversation that you have during the day.
3. Spend a few moments each day listening to the sounds around you. Allow your awareness to expand intentionally as you hone in on this powerful practice of active listening.

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>

A practical guide for caregivers: Oh brother! Sibling rivalry



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

To what extent is caregiving the responsibility of the family? Should all siblings share equally in the care of their parents? Is it unreasonable for elderly parents to expect to stay in their homes if it means their children prepare all their meals and maintain their home and yard? If aging parents need financial support should siblings contribute equally? If one daughter takes on the majority of the care does she deserve a greater share of the inheritance?

Consider your family. What are the chances there will be disagreement?

In 40% of families, caregiving for an elderly parent permanently damages the relationship between adult brothers and sisters. How can this be prevented? No one wants even minor family conflict to mark the end of a life.

Caregiving should be a partnership between parents and their adult children. Parents who take the responsibility to plan wisely for their aging years can reduce the chances of family conflict. If you have the luxury to plan ahead, talk to your parents about their plans for the future. Since responsibility for their welfare may pass from aging parents to their adult children, both should be informed and prepared. Recognize that the most common disagreements are over:

Burden of care

Caregiving is sometimes referred to as the burden of care. My mother was not a burden but her heart disease and resulting dementia was a burden for both of us. Becoming the primary caregiver is rarely a choice. Most often, the responsibility falls to the son or daughter who lives closest to their parents. This inequality strains the relationships between brothers and sisters. Look for specific ways you can help, even from a distance. My brother had a great idea and created an online shared calendar. I entered things like mom's hair

dresser, shopping, social events, dental and medical appointments. The rest of the family picked up the ball and chose things they could help with. What a relief not to have to ask!

Parents' health and safety

Declining health and loss of independence is a fearful thing for both seniors and their families. Families are better able to support parents who have chosen a patient advocate and a health care proxy and have written a health care directive. Choosing Wisely Canada is an excellent site to help families make informed decisions about tests and treatments. The well-being of your parents is your primary concern. You may not agree with their wishes but unless they are at risk you should respect their decisions.

Financial issues

Wise, informed choices can reduce conflict over financial issues. Seniors should have their affairs in order. This means writing a will, an Enduring Power of Attorney and choosing an executor. The Manitoba Legal Guide for Seniors is an excellent resource.

Sometimes parents will ask that siblings act together as their medical and financial representatives. This may seem fair but it can be inconvenient, expensive and the cause of quarrels. It is much wiser if they choose the one who is most suited to the task and who lives the closest. Although you may not agree with your parents' decisions, these are their decisions to make. They will need your support.

I appreciated the fact that my mother took the time to deal with this uncomfortable business when she was seventy. This was long enough before her death for it to be more practical than emotional. She had her lawyer draw up a will and an enduring power of attorney.



In 40% of families, caregiving for an elderly parent permanently damages the relationship between adult brothers and sisters. How can this be prevented? No one wants even minor family conflict to mark the end of a life.

We were given copies. She consulted us before she wrote a list of personal items we were to receive as part of our inheritance. She wrote detailed wishes for her funeral. When she passed away at 92 it was an honour to plan the service she wanted. At the end of the service Juliet, her tiny great-granddaughter, clapped. What a tribute!

Remember it's family; it's emotional. Everyone will be feeling various levels of grief and guilt. Anger and resentment can surface. Always try to be kinder than you feel. Show appreciation for the primary caregiver. That person needs to hear that you care about them. Never lash out no matter how much effort it takes. Unless the health or safety of your parents is at risk keep your opinions to yourself. This is especially true for in-laws. Stay focussed on your goal – the best end of life care for your parents. Honour their memory with a family still intact.

Oh Brother! Sibling Rivalry is 7th of a series, *A Practical Guide for Caregivers*. Links to previous Balance issues and direct links to resources can be found on the 4Teachers page of *Where Next! A Path for Caregivers*.

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



Setting up your office to be active

By Beth McKechnie, Green Action Centre

There never seems to be enough time in the day to do what we want to do. Fitting in physical activity and some fresh air can seem impossible. Want to find a way around it? Try switching to an active commute.

Cycling or walking to work builds physical and mental health benefits into your day, and leaves you with even more time in the end. For example, if you typically spend 15 minutes driving to work and it takes you 30 minutes to cycle instead, you have added an hour of physical activity to your day while only adding a half-hour to your commute!

Besides being good for the heart and waistline, an active commute can help you sleep better and improve your sense of well-being.

In fact, it's a win-win-win, as walking and cycling are both low cost activities saving you money on fuel, parking, and wear/tear on your vehicle. And for the final win, there are zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions involved. Cycling 8 km daily instead of driving can reduce household GHG emissions by 6% annually. This is meaningful given transportation is the largest contributor to emissions in Manitoba.

If you are concerned how you can be active and still look professional, here are some tips shared by seasoned walkers and cyclists.

Clothing and hair:

- Wear your usual outfits to avoid carrying and changing clothes at the office.
- Pedal or walk at a relaxed pace to avoid sweating – it's not a race!
- Dress in layers so you can shed or add a layer if you are too warm or cool.
- Combine fashion and function by dressing in clothes with some give.
- Choose a bike with a chain guard to eliminate the need for a pant clip.
- Make it easy to wear a dress or skirt by riding a step-through bike.
- Ensure your dress shoes have a rubber sole to avoid slipping on the bike pedals.
- Wearing a suit? Carry your jacket or keep a full suit and change of shirts at the office. Replenish weekly.
- Walk in comfortable shoes with proper arch support. Carry your dress shoes or keep them at the office.
- Part your hair opposite to how you normally wear it, so it doesn't flatten in place under your helmet. Flip to normal part after arriving. Tie back long hair into a ponytail or bun below helmet.

Freshening up:

- Check to see if a shower is available in your building or one nearby. If not, use handy baby wipes and carry deodorant.
- Put on your make-up at the office, especially mascara.

At the office:

- If you wear a lighter or high visibility jacket for walking or cycling, keep a dress jacket in your office for daytime meetings.
- Store make-up and a hair brush in your desk for use after arriving at the office.
- Tuck a pair of dress shoes in a drawer or under your desk.

And whether it's your lunch, a sweater, work materials, shoes or a purse, you'll want to carry items with you to and from the office. Choose a fitted backpack for walking. You might want to consider a backpack with sternum (chest) straps to keep the weight off your shoulders and back. For cycling, make it easy to carry items by using a basket or panniers (saddlebags).

Arrive with a smile on your face, ready to meet the day.

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

Clarity over clutter: Different types of disorganization



By Susan Macaulay, Clarity over Clutter

What someone sees as a first impression, may not always be the real story.

When a person walks into a home that has clutter or items piled in various areas, they may assume that the person is lazy, can't look after their home, or has no interest in caring for it. In many cases is not the truth. There are many reasons why people have struggles with the way their home is functioning. Instead of judging a person, take the time to figure out what is going on, get to the real issue and work from there. There are 3 types of disorganization.

Situational disorganization

Situational disorganization is dealing with clutter or chaos for a brief period, as a result of major events or changes in a person's life. There can be any number of events that can cause this to happen. Some causes could be:

- Special event, family reunion, wedding
- Holidays
- Marriage or divorce
- Job or career change
- Renovations or moving
- Serious illness or death of a loved one
- Surgery
- Addition of a family member

These are events that in time, a person can readjust to the situation and return to continuing to maintaining organization in the home. With the adjustment there may be different systems set up in the home to help maintain an organized space.

Chronic disorganization

Chronic Disorganization is constant and persistent over a long period of time. It can limit daily functions of thinking, working and relaxing which affect the quality of life for a person. With chronic disorganization, past attempts of self-help efforts have been unsuccessful and may have been a part of a person's childhood years and into their adult life. Common characteristics of chronic disorganization:

- Accumulation of large quantities of items
- Abundance of papers
- Easily distracted
- Needs visual clues
- Many interests and unfinished projects
- Difficulty letting go of items
- Loses or misplaces items

Hoarding

The definition of hoarding was categorized by *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)* as a symptom of OCD for many years. In this edition it placed hoarding into its own diagnosis. The definition of hoarding is as follows (diagnostic criteria):

1. Persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value.
2. This difficulty is due to a perceived need to save the items and to distress associated with discarding them.
3. The difficulty discarding possessions results in the accumulation of possessions that congest and clutter active living areas and substantially compromises their intended use. If living areas are uncluttered, it is only because of the interventions of third parties (e.g., family members, cleaners, authorities).
4. The hoarding causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (including maintaining a safe environment for self and others).
5. The hoarding is not attributable to another medical condition (e.g., brain injury, cerebrovascular disease, Prader-Willi syndrome).
6. The hoarding is not better explained by the symptoms of another mental disorder (e.g., obsessions in obsessive-compulsive disorder, decreased energy in major depressive disorder, delusions in schizophrenia or another psychotic



"Judging a person does not define who they are. It defines who you are." - Kristen Stewart

disorder, cognitive deficits in major neurocognitive disorder, restricted interests in autism spectrum disorder).

Some signs of hoarding are:

- Excessive collections of items in the home, outbuildings or yard
- Accumulation of combustible items (newspapers and debris)
- Blocked or limited access to exits (doors/windows)
- Narrow pathways in the home
- Rodent or insect infestations
- Rotting food and/or food containers
- Human and/or animal waste
- Neglect of home maintenance
- Non-working utilities

Hoarded homes may not necessarily mean garbage piled or rotting food. There are situations where people have hoarding tendencies and the items are well cared for.

If you or someone you know is dealing with disorganization in their home, taking the time to review the different types can be helpful and give a clearer understanding of what their situation may be. Not having a judgmental attitude is very important in helping them to make the changes they want in their lives.

Organizing and maintaining it is work, takes time and energy, but the rewards are well worth it.

Susan Macaulay of Clarity Over Clutter is a Professional Organizer who works with individuals, and families to create and enjoy a functional home. Susan specializes, as well, working with those who are dealing with Chronic Disorganization and/or Hoarding.

Enjoy your food: Oh sugar, sugar! Eliminating added sugars



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

I frequently hear comments that carbohydrates are “bad” due to the impact on body weight, diabetes control, bowel health, and many other health issues. I find myself trying to quietly slip away from these conversations as the battle to explain the TYPE of carbohydrate one eats and the AMOUNT are far more important than an umbrella statement that paints all carbohydrate as “bad”.

This article will focus on added sugars, the type of carbohydrate that SHOULD be limited in the diet. Overconsumption of these types of sugars has been scientifically linked to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and poor dental health.

What is added sugar?

The first misconception is that all sugar is unhealthy. However, there are plenty of foods that are healthy and contain natural sugars. These include the sugars found in vegetables, fruit, dairy, and grains. Added sugars, or sometimes called free sugars, are unnecessary for the body (except during longer duration sports) and do not contribute to any health benefits. These sugars are found in our food supply chain through food manufacturing and processing, during the cooking process in our homes, and in some cases they are naturally found in food (i.e. syrup, honey). These sugars entice consumers because they taste good in food.

At last report by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation (2014), “sugar sweetened beverages are the largest contributor of sugar in the diet”. These beverages, sometimes called liquid candy, can pack a significant amount of sugar in a small volume.

Take a look (warning, this information may result in sugar shock):

BEVERAGE	TSPs SUGAR
500 – 600 ML SPORTS BEVERAGE	5 – 9
250 ML ENERGY DRINK	6
250 ML ICED CAPPUCCINO	7
250 ML FRUIT JUICE, FRUIT PUNCH	7
355 ML POP, ICED TEA	10
590 ML POP	17
1 LARGE SLUSH DRINK	33

What are the daily limit guidelines on added sugars?

The World Health Organization (2015) and the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation (2014) recommend: **Limit intake of added sugar to no more than 10% of daily calorie intake. Ideally, reduce to less than 5% of daily calorie intake.**

What does that actually mean?

It is estimated that Canadians consume upwards of 11-13% of daily calorie intake from free sugar. The recommendations presented above, would mean that all Canadians should limit added sugar each day to: **Limit intake of added sugar to no more than 12 teaspoons daily. Ideally, limit to no more than 6 teaspoons added sugar daily.**

Armed with this recommendation, you may find the following practical tips will help you navigate through all the sweet stuff on the store shelves:

- When reading labels that identify “sugar” under the carbohydrate heading, know that 4 grams sugar = 1 teaspoon of sugar. Keep in mind that listing “sugar” on food labels in Canada is currently not a requirement for food producers.
- Any of these words listed on a food label are forms of added sugars: agave, any type of syrup, cane juice, dextrose, dextrin, fructose, honey, icing sugar, invert sugar, liquid sugar, maltodextrin, maltose, molasses, nectar.



- Select cereals with less than 6 grams of sugar and at least 4 grams of dietary fibre per serving. Add a cup fruit or berries for added sweetness if needed.
- Limit 100% fruit juice to a maximum of 125 ml daily.
- If canned fruit is part of your diet, select varieties packed in water or their own juices.
- Reduce the sugar called for in recipes by 1/3 and add dried fruit or sweet spices (i.e. cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, cloves).

There you have it, the scoop on sugar. Be kind to yourself, small changes in the diet can result in big changes in health and wellbeing. More importantly, they are likely more sustainable than a complete overhaul of the diet.

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.



Truffled mac 'n cheese cups

Prep time: 10 min

Cook time: 30 min

Makes: 12 servings

- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) dry breadcrumbs
- 2 1/2 cups (625 ml) elbow macaroni
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) butter
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) all-purpose flour
- 1 (5 ml) dry mustard
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml) salt
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) pepper
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) milk
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) truffle oil*
- 2 1/2 cups (625 ml) grated Canadian aged cheddar, divided

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Butter a non-stick muffin pan (for bigger appetites, butter only 10 muffin cups); divide breadcrumbs between cups. Shake and tilt pan to coat all sides of cups well. Discard any excess.

2. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook macaroni for about 8 min or until al dente, or according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat, melt butter. Sprinkle with flour, mustard, salt and pepper; cook, whisking, for 1 min. Gradually whisk in milk. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Whisk for 3 to 5 min or until smooth and thickened. Remove from heat; stir in truffle oil and 2 cups (500 ml) Cheddar until melted and smooth.

3. Drain macaroni and return to pot. Pour cheese sauce over pasta; stir until coated.

4. Divide mixture evenly among muffin cups. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake for 20 min or until hot. Let stand for 10 min. Run a small knife around each muffin, then ease out of cup.

Recipe courtesy of Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, www.dairybest.ca
Image courtesy of Dairy Farmers of Canada, www.dairygoodness.ca



Easy cauliflower cheddar soup

Prep time: 20 min

Cook time: 40 min

Makes: 6-8 servings

- 9 cups (2.25 L) chopped cauliflower (about 2 lbs/1kg)
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 tsp (10 ml) minced garlic
- pepper
- 2 cups (500 ml) reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup (250 ml) water
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 cups (625 ml) milk
- ground nutmeg
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) shredded Canadian cheddar cheese, divided
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) salt (approx.)

Directions:

1. In a large pot, combine cauliflower, celery, onion, potatoes, garlic, pepper to taste, chicken broth and water; cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and boil gently for 15 to 20 min or until vegetables are soft.

2. Whisk flour into milk; pour into pot with nutmeg to taste. Cook, stirring, for about 3 min or until slightly thickened. Remove from heat.

3. Using an immersion blender or transferring in batches to an upright blender, purée until smooth.

4. Return to pot, if necessary. Heat over medium heat, stirring often, for about 5 min or until bubbling. Remove from heat and stir in 1 cup (250 ml) of the cheese until melted. Season with pepper and up to 1/4 tsp (1 ml) salt. Ladle into warm bowls and sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Recipe and image courtesy of Dairy Farmers of Canada, www.dairygoodness.ca.



Pizza dough

Prep time: 60 min

Cook time: 15 min

Makes: 4-6 servings

- 1 (8 g) pouch of instant (rapid rise) dry yeast
- 2 tsp (10 ml) sugar
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) melted butter
- 1 1/4 cups (310 ml) warm milk
- 3 cups (750 ml) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp (5 ml) salt

Directions:

1. In the large bowl of a stand mixer, combine yeast, sugar, melted butter, and warm (not hot) milk. Let rest 10 minutes to allow yeast to activate. Foam will form along the surface.

2. Combine flour and salt. Using the dough hook attachment, on low speed, slowly begin to add flour mixture until dough forms a ball around the hook, and no longer sticks to the edges of the bowl.

3. Place the ball of dough in a greased bowl and turn over once to coat all of the dough. Cover and allow dough to rise in a warm, draft-free location. The dough will double in volume. This should take about 45 minutes.

4. Grease a large pizza pan; spread dough over pan. Spread desired sauce and evenly sprinkle Mozzarella cheese over the sauce. Evenly distribute other desired toppings over the entire pizza. Bake the pizza at 425° F for 15 minutes or until cheese begins to turn golden. Remove pizza from the oven. Serve immediately.

Recipe courtesy of Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, www.dairybest.ca



Yoga practice:

The wind relieving pose

By Tally Young



Everything gets a little backed up in life. Traffic, the kitchen sink, our workloads waiting for us at our desks. It seems that this is the natural way of things but we know this is just one of the great irritations of living today. Trying to catch up.

Our elimination system is one of the systems affected by the change in our general disposition. When all emotions turn to stress, one of the systems to be ignored is the elimination system. This is because the body wants to put all its effort into getting you back to a place of calm, so all systems that do not take care of the body's critical needs get neglected. Leaving us to eventually have the feeling of being backed up.

This simple posture works to relieve the pressure on the elimination system

by putting space back into the body. It's simple set up makes it easy to do almost anywhere.

Achieving the wind relieving pose

As always, a quiet space is best. Your choice on the need of a mat or just laying on the floor, then follow these simple steps:

1. On your back take 10 full deep breaths. Draw your right leg into your chest. Place your hands around your thigh and squeeze, if any discomfort just move your leg a little to the midline or outside edge of your body to readjust until you have complete comfort.
2. Squeeze the back of the thigh until you can feel the lower back comfortably push into the floor.

3. Move into 15 full breaths. You can move deeper into the squeeze or soften depending on your body's need. When done, release and lengthen your leg to the floor.

4. Move to the left leg and repeat steps 2 and 3.

5. Move both legs into the chest and one hand onto the back of each thigh. Hold for 20 breaths. You can rock from side to side lightly if you like or stay completely still. Move with the position that is most comfortable to you.

You can repeat this posture as many times per day as you like. Not only does it massage the digestive system, it also relieves back pressure and moves nutrients around the spine.

Finding your truth. What makes you happy?



By Sofia Costantini

What makes me happy? I know my work makes me happy and being surrounded by positive, energetic happy people makes all the difference. What about me? Am I happy with myself? What is my truth?

I think if I were to pick my top three things that I desire the most, it would be love, respect and being understood. Sometimes I fight so hard to receive these that I think I lose perspective of what is important. I catch myself in negative thought, which drastically changes my mood and how I view what I'm experiencing. If I'm not content with who I am then it doesn't really matter what I'm doing because then I'm just putting in time.

Do you find you go through the motions but aren't necessarily enjoying what you're doing? How can you change that? What needs to happen?

Our needs and what is important to us are constantly evolving and changing. That's why it's important to always ask ourselves these questions:

1. What is my purpose?
2. Does this serve me in a way that brings me joy?
3. How important is this in my life?
4. What do I need to change in myself and around me in order to get back on track?

My thought is that everything we look for or desire from others we need to consider finding in ourselves first. If we are completely content with who we are and what we offer then it doesn't really matter what we receive. Don't get me wrong, it's absolutely amazing to receive acts of love, respect and approval but I think it's more meaningful when we are already filling up our personal tank first because then we can accept the acts



of kindness for what they are without expectation.

Some of the negative thoughts that fill my mind on a regular basis when I'm not in an active state of positive thinking are:

- "There's never enough money."
- "I'm getting older; why would anyone find me attractive?"
- "I'm not smart enough to do this".

I quickly try to change these statements to positive affirmations, which look like this:

- "There is always enough money. My income is constantly increasing."
- "I embrace my age. I am beautiful and I am loved."
- "I'm smart, talented, respected, and I can do whatever I set my mind to."

In order for me to radiate happiness I need to nurture myself first and then with people and situations that provide opportunities that allow me to share and receive my desire for love, respect and understanding.

Consider working through the following five steps:

1. Think about the top three negative thoughts that fill your mind on a regular basis.
2. How can you turn them into positive affirmations?
3. How does turning it into a positive statement change how you feel about yourself?
4. What might be three things you can do for yourself to help make your life more enjoyable?
5. Think of three things you would like to achieve in the next 3 – 6 months and write them down. Dream Big!

Working through these questions may give you a little more clarity as to why you might be unsettled and may guide you in a direction of positive alignment!

Believe in yourself and always remind yourself that what you bring to this world is positive and meaningful.

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