

Well of Being

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Fellowship 2020
UNSDG #3: Good Health and Well-Being

Team/Contributors:

Alisa Beyer, alisa.beyer@cgc.edu
Sharon McLaughlin, Sharon.McLaughlin@mesacc.edu
Eli Moore, Eli.Moore@montgomerycollege.edu

World Health's Organization's definition of health is 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 2006). The focus of this project is on students' mental health and wellness taking a more holistic approach. Holistic means "the whole person." The WHO defines mental wellness as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2006). We identify one's wellbeing as a healthy body (physical wellness) as well as a healthy mind (mental wellness) and a healthy heart (emotional wellness).

Overall health and wellbeing includes emotional, mental and physical aspects. When these aspects are in balance and alignment, a human being flourishes. Each of these aspects are interconnected and influence the others.

The remedy is to look deeper and recognize that we human beings are physically, mentally, and emotionally the same. - Dalai Lama

This project is made up of three assignments:

1. [Well of Being Personal Challenge](#)
2. [Sharing Wellness Challenge](#)
3. [Wellspring: Reflections on the Well of Being](#)

This document is designed to provide users with the necessary tools needed to implement this project in any class. While instructional guidelines have been outlined, the intention is that all expectations are adaptable (e.g. length of time spent on project, number of activities completed, etc.) to meet the needs of an individual class. Adaptable elements are highlighted for ease of editing.

Well of Being Personal Challenge Assignment

Instructions:

1. Over the next **three** weeks, students will complete **three** Well of Being Challenges selected from the menu below, completing **one from each of the three categories**.
2. The challenges can be completed in any order but should be done one at a time.
3. Each challenge takes **at least one-week** to complete.
4. Each challenge includes a tracking form which will be used in the following ways:
 - a. Complete pre-reflection questions and activities relevant to the challenge
 - b. Log progress throughout the course of the week (should be completed on a daily basis for all challenges)
 - c. Complete final reflection prompts for the challenge.

In order to complete the Google Document Tracking Forms for each challenge:

1. Please *make a copy* of the tracking form for the challenge(s) you have selected
 - a. Do not request access to edit the original document
 - b. Save your copy in your Google drive
 - c. You will submit this in the LMS when the assignment is due

For more support using Google documents, go [here](#) (go to make a copy of a file)

2. Type your responses to questions, fill in tables and save to your Google Drive.
 - a. You can continue to add to this document throughout the challenge.
 - b. Tables will expand to fit additional text as you add to them.
 - c. You can add additional rows to the tables to track your progress
3. To submit your completed tracking form, download and save your document as a PDF and upload your submission via the Well of Being Personal Challenge Assignment in our Learning Management System.

For more support converting to PDF, go [here](#) (go to download copy of a file)

Well of Being Challenge Menu

<u>Emotional Wellness (Heart)</u>	<u>Mental Wellness (Mind)</u>	<u>Physical Wellness (Body)</u>
<u>Values Challenge</u>	<u>4-S Challenge</u>	<u>Sleep Challenge</u>
<u>Self Compassion Audio Challenge</u>	<u>Get Outside for Attention Restoration Challenge</u>	<u>Get Active Challenge</u>
<u>Five Good Things Challenge</u>	<u>Growth Mindset Challenge</u>	<u>Mindful Eating Challenge</u>
<u>Gratitude Letter Challenge</u>		<u>Pause and Plan Challenge</u>

Emotional Wellness (Heart) Challenges

Emotional wellness refers to our ability as human beings to accept and embrace feelings through moments of difficulty and change. An emotionally healthy person can allow their feelings to be deeply appreciated and appropriately expressed. The everyday challenges of our living experience offer opportunities to practice responses, rather than reactions, to allow emotional wellness to flourish.

“Emotional health includes both emotional intelligence and emotional regulation. When the subjective experience of emotions is appropriate over a sustained period, emotional health is thought to be present. Positive affect will be apparent in mundane, daily activities” (Miller, 2020).

Emotional distress leaves people susceptible to physical illness. Some studies have shown that ailments like cardiovascular disease and immune system repression can be linked to emotional distress (Stewart-Brown, S., 1998). Studies on emotional distress and the underlying neurological circuitry indicate a connection with substance abuse and other dysfunctional behaviors (Sinha, R. et al., 2004).

References

- Emotion, Stress, & Health: Crash Course (2014), <https://youtu.be/4KbSRXP0wik> (relevant 3:33-6:34--cue to start there, <https://youtu.be/4KbSRXP0wik?t=213>)
- Miller, Kelly. (2020). *What is Emotional Health?* www.positivepsychology.com/emotional-health-activities/
- Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic Happiness*. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Stewart-Brown, S. (1998). *Emotional wellbeing and its relation to health*. *BMJ*, 317(7173), 1608–1609.
- Sinha, R., Lacadie, C., Skudlarski, P., & Wexler, B. E. (2004). *Neural Circuits Underlying Emotional Distress in Humans*. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1032(1), 254–257.

Values Challenge

Past research findings suggest that connecting to personal values can help people be more resilient in the face of stress. Your values are the things that you consider to be important in life, such as honesty, kindness, care, autonomy, helping others, and financial independence. A study by Creswell and colleagues (2005) showed that reflecting on personal values buffered physiological and psychological stress responses during a laboratory stress challenge.

Values provide a reason to keep going, especially when life events make it hard or impossible to live in line with personal values. For example, after becoming unemployed, a father with two young kids may be very motivated to bounce back and find a new job, so that his kids will have sufficient resources to grow up as happy adults. Driven by his values “love” and “care”, he may find the strength to actively deal with the stressful life event in order to continue living in line with

these values. In this tool, values affirmation is used to build resilience during stressful life events. Simply put, this challenge is about managing stress by knowing what you value.

Instructions:

1. Take Values Strengths Assessment. Complete the free assessment by logging in at <http://viacharacter.org>. This will require you to create a login and password.
2. Record your top 2 values and their meaning from the report.
3. Fill out the initial feedback on the [Values Challenge tracking form](#).
4. Over the course of the next week, when you are faced with a stressful situation or challenge, pause and reflect on one of your values. Consider how you could re-think your reaction to this situation and use your values to drive your response in a positive manner.
5. Daily input information on the tracking form related to how you used reflection on your values to impact your responses.
6. At the end of the week, complete the final reflection questions.

To find out more about character strengths, watch this short video (8 min), <https://youtu.be/kq-rOeLLciE>

VIA (2015). Science of Character - VIA Institute, <https://youtu.be/kq-rOeLLciE>

Assignment adapted from Dilbeck, T., Reed, S., Welle, V. Ernst, R. (2018).

Lesson plan: Lesson Plan: VIA Character Strengths

<https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/topss/teaching-resources/character-strengths-lesson>

References:

- Peterson, C., & Park, N. (2009). Classifying and measuring strengths of character. In S. J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.), Oxford handbook of positive psychology, 2nd edition (pp. 25-33). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. New York: Oxford University Press and Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Self-Compassion Session Audio Challenge

Self-compassion can facilitate well-being by replacing maladaptive emotion-regulation strategies (like ruminating or self-judgement or catastrophizing) with more adaptive strategies like self-kindness and mindful non-judgment).

Instructions:

1. Brainstorm and make a list of situations where you tend to be critical of yourself. Utilize the [Self-Compassion Challenge tracking form](#) to write down examples.
2. Complete the 20 minutes [Neff Guided Meditation](#). (audio session)
3. Complete the tracking form for one week
4. Answer the final reflection questions

To find out more about the benefits of self-compassion, watch this short video (3 min) from Dr. Neff, <https://youtu.be/qTGlbGSCvEI>

Assignment adapted from Santoro, A. N., & Updegraff, J.A. (2020). Pursuing Health Goals in the Face of Failure. APS poster.

References:

- Hanson, R. (2018). Richard Hansen and Kristen Neff: The Benefits of Self-Compassion (2018). <https://youtu.be/qTGlbGSCvEI>
- Neff, K. D. (2012). The science of self-compassion. *Compassion and wisdom in psychotherapy*, 1, 79-92.
- Santoro, A. N., & Updegraff, J.A. (2020). Pursuing Health Goals in the Face of Failure. APS poster.

Five Good Things Challenge

Gratitude is the positive emotional response experienced in relation to receiving a benefit from an external source (Renshaw & Bolognino, 2016). Gratitude research has shown by doing simple things like writing down what you are grateful for, participants see benefits in physical, social, and psychological areas (Bono & Emmons, 2004; Emmons & Rose, 2019).

Physical	Social	Psychological
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stronger immune systems• Less bothered by aches and pains• Lower blood pressure• Exercise more and take better care of their health• Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More helpful, generous, and compassionate• More forgiving• More outgoing• Feel less lonely and isolated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher levels of positive emotions• More alert, alive, and awake• More joy and pleasure• More optimism and happiness

To find out more about the power of gratitude, watch this short video (3 min), <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU>

Assignment adapted from: Greater Good in Action (2020). Three Good Things Challenge, <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/three-good-things>

References

- Bono, G., Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2004). Gratitude in practice and the practice of gratitude. *Positive psychology in practice*, 464-481.

- Emmons, R. A., Froh, J., & Rose, R. (2019). Gratitude.
- Santoro, A. N., & Updegraff, J.A. (2020). Pursuing Health Goals in the Face of Failure. APS poster.
- Tremendousness (2016). The Science of Gratitude, <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU> video

Instructions:

1. The basic practice is straightforward. Record five things on the [Five Good Things Challenge tracking form](#) that you experience this week for which you are grateful.
2. At the end of the week, complete the final reflection questions
3. Tips
 - a. What you choose to be grateful for can range from the mundane (“waking up this morning”) to the sublime (“the generosity of friends”) to the timeless (“the Rolling Stones”).
 - b. Don’t just go through the motions. Research by psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky and others suggests that journaling is more effective if you first make the conscious decision to become happier and more grateful.
 - c. Go for depth over breadth. Elaborating in detail about a particular thing for which you’re grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things.
 - d. Get personal. Focusing on people to whom you are grateful has more of an impact than focusing on things for which you are grateful.
 - e. Try subtraction, not just addition. One effective way of stimulating gratitude is to reflect on what your life would be like without certain blessings, rather than just tallying up all those good things.
 - f. Savor surprises. Try to record events that were unexpected or surprising, as these tend to elicit stronger levels of gratitude.
 - g. Don’t overdo it. Writing occasionally is more beneficial than daily journaling. In fact, one study by Lyubomirsky and her colleagues found that people who wrote in their gratitude journals once a week for six weeks reported boosts in happiness afterward; people who wrote three times per week didn’t. “We adapt to positive events quickly, especially if we constantly focus on them,” says Emmons. “It seems counterintuitive, but it is how the mind works.”

Gratitude Letter Challenge

Gratitude is the positive emotional response experienced in relation to receiving a benefit from an external source (Renshaw & Bolognino, 2016). Gratitude research has shown by doing simple things like keeping a gratitude journal, participants see benefits in physical, social, and psychological areas (Bono & Emmons, 2004; Emmons & Rose, 2019).

Physical	Social	Psychological
• Stronger immune	• More helpful, generous, and compassionate	• Higher levels of positive

<p>systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less bothered by aches and pains • Lower blood pressure • Exercise more and take better care of their health • Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More forgiving • More outgoing • Feel less lonely and isolated. 	<p>emotions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More alert, alive, and awake • More joy and pleasure • More optimism and happiness
---	---	--

To find out more about the power of gratitude, watch this short video (3 min), <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU> and the power of sharing a gratitude letter (7 min), <https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6lg>

Assignment adapted from Sonja Lyubomirsky and Greater Good in Action's Gratitude Letter

References

- Bono, G., Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2004). Gratitude in practice and the practice of gratitude. *Positive psychology in practice*, 464-481.
- Greater Good In Action (2020). Gratitude Letter, https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/gratitude_letter
- Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410–421.
- SoulPancake (2013). An Experiment in Gratitude: The Science of Happiness, <https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6lg>
- Tremendousness (2016). The Science of Gratitude, <https://youtu.be/JMd1CcGZYwU>

Instructions:

1. Please take a moment to think back over the past several years of your life and remember an instance when someone did something for you for which you are extremely grateful. For example, think of the people – parents, relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, teammates, employers, and so on – who have been especially kind to you but have never heard you express your gratitude.
2. Write a [Gratitude Letter](#) expressing thanks, and deliver it to that person.
3. Complete an initial reflection on the [Gratitude Reflection Challenge tracking form](#).
4. Reach out to that person and read them or give them the letter sometime this week.
5. Complete the final reflection questions.

Mental Wellness (Mind) Challenges

When you are stressed, how does your mind work? What ideas and feelings are running through your mind? Do you see failure as you are deficient or that you give up? Or a challenge for growing and learning? Individuals can be placed as having a fixed or growth mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset see failure as the end game. Individuals with a growth mindset

see failure as part of a process. Individuals with a growth mindset are able to reframe their perspectives. They feel that with effort, they can change, and that they have the capacity and capability to do so (Dweck, 2008). Part of improving your well-being is having a growth mindset. Having a growth mindset extends to your motivation levels, feelings of confidence (self-efficacy), and even social belonging (Rhew, Piro, Goolkasian, & Costentino, 2018).

Being able to shift your mindset can positively impact your thinking (cognition), affect (emotion), and behavior (healthy lifestyle). Being able to shift your mindset is a part of self-regulation. Self-regulation is the ability to direct one's attention, thoughts, moods, and behavior in line with one's personal goals. Self-regulation is among the most critical skills in life.

References

- Dweck, C. S. (2008). Mindset: The new psychology of success. Random House Digital, Inc..
- Rhew, E., Piro, J. S., Goolkasian, P., & Cosentino, P. (2018). The effects of a growth mindset on self-efficacy and motivation. Cogent Education, 5(1), 1492337.
- World Health Organization. (2006). Constitution of the world health organization. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf

4 S-Challenge

This challenge connects you to 4 Ss that help combat stress and build resilience. The 4 Ss connect to mindful frameworks you can use to reduce stress.

- Support
- Strategies for coping
- Sagacity (wisdom/insight/comfort/hope)
- Solution seeking

To find out more about the power of having a balanced view of stress (4 min), <https://youtu.be/BjtdoLhSWgl>

Assignment adapted from Poole & Alberts (2019)

References

- Clio (2018). Keynote Highlight: Kelly McGonigal, <https://youtu.be/BjtdoLhSWgl>
- McDonald, G., Jackson, D., Wilkes, L., & Vickers, M. H. (2012). A work-based educational intervention to support the development of personal resilience in nurses and midwives. Nurse Education Today, 32, 378-384.
- Poole, L. & Alberts, H. (2019). Resilience Plan: The Four Ss. Positivepsychology.com

Instructions:

1. Create a 4-S Plan and document it on your [4-S Challenge tracking form](#).
 - a. Recall a recent time you overcame a challenge or set back. Briefly describe (e.g., received negative feedback from instructor/boss, had an argument, etc). This will help you to develop the 4-Ss

- b. Write down who you can contact for advice, support, pep talk. (Support)
 - c. Write down what strategies you could use to help cope (Strategies) - consider adaptive coping strategies such as going for a walk, writing in a journal, practice calm breathing.
 - d. Write down a mantra or phrase that can help lift you up (consider quote, song lyric, saying from friend/family member) (Sagacity)
 - e. Write down how you dealt with the situation - what were your solution-seeking behaviors? (Solution seeking)
2. When faced with frustrating and/or stressful situations this week, turn to one of the 4 Ss that you outlined to help address the situation. Log your experience of doing that on your 4-S Challenge tracking form.
3. Complete the final reflection at the end of the week.

Get Outside for Attention Restoration Challenge (Pennock, 2019)

Research has linked spending time in nature (with fascinating stimuli like a sunset vs walking down your street) can have a restorative effect. For example, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) found young adults who had a view of nature had higher scores on attentional capacity and were also less likely to be aggressive, compared to people who lived in the inner city. In an experimental design, Berto, J (2005) evaluated if contact with nature improves attention. They conducted two experiments that show that walking in nature or viewing pictures of nature can improve directed-attention abilities (i.e., backwards digit-span task). For the experiment, participants walked at a park or downtown for 50-minutes. Participants who walked in the park had improved attentional abilities after the walk. In experiment 2, participants were shown pictures of nature versus urban settings. Participants who viewed nature also had greater attentional abilities. These findings suggest that spending time in nature can help restore attentional resources.

How does viewing a natural environment help with cognition and renewing our resources? Kaplan's (1995) Attention Restoration Theory (ART) may help explain the cognitive benefits of being outdoors. According to ART, nature renews our attention after exerting mental energy such as; feeling tired after studying for exams or working tirelessly on a work project or an assessment.

To find out about the effects of nature on cognition/attention restoration theory, check out this short video (5 min), <https://youtu.be/10u419eU2rM>

References

- Berman, M. G., Jonides, J., & Kaplan, S. (2008). The cognitive benefits of interacting with nature. *Psychological science*, 19(12), 1207-1212.
- Berto, R. (2005). Exposure to restorative environments helps restore attentional capacity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 25, 249–259.
- Kaplan, S. (1995). The restorative benefits of nature: Toward an integrative framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 15, 169–182.
- Kuo, F.E., & Sullivan, W.C. (2001). Aggression and violence in the inner city: Effects of environment via mental fatigue. *Environment and Behavior*, 33, 543–571.

- Pennock, S.F. (2019). Spending Time In Nature. [Positivepsychology.com](https://www.positivepsychology.com)

Instructions:

1. Spend time in nature in an active way (e.g. taking a walk in a forest) or in a more passive way (e.g. sitting at a bench at the sea).
 - a. Focus on frequency rather than duration (daily verses only once with longer duration)
2. Record how often you did this challenge and your experiences on the [Get Outside for Attention Restoration tracking form](#).
3. Complete the final reflection questions at the end of the week.

Growth Mindset Challenge (Dweck, adapted by Poole)

Carol Dweck (1999) coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset to describe the underlying beliefs people have about their intelligence and ability. A person with a fixed mindset assumes that human qualities, such as intelligence, character and ability, are relatively stable, and cannot be changed in any meaningful way. Success is the affirmation of one's inherent intelligence (Dweck, 1999). Conversely, a person with a growth mindset believes that human qualities are malleable and can be improved with effort. In this way, challenges and obstacles are viewed as a natural part of learning (Dweck & Leggett, 1998).

According to mindset theory, holding a growth mindset is advantageous. People with growth mindsets are more likely to succeed academically because they are more motivated to learn, have a desire for hard work, are less discouraged by difficulty, and use more effective strategies for learning (Cury, Elliott, Da Fonseca, & Moller, 2006; Dweck and Leggett 1988). In contrast, people with fixed mindsets are more likely to avoid challenges and be debilitated by failure because they believe they do not have the ability to succeed (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). Mindsets can be changed, and shifting mindsets can have a profound impact on nearly every aspect of one's life. The key to changing mindsets lies first and foremost in self-awareness.

Neuroplasticity research that demonstrates that the brain is malleable—that it grows with effort and experience; with repeated practices, neural networks foster new connections, strengthen existing ones, and build insulation that speeds transmission of impulses (Draganski et al., 2004).

To find out more about Growth Mindset, watch this short video, How can a Growth Mindset lead to better wellbeing? <https://youtu.be/k3OMUaDajD0> (6 minutes) Or maybe this one is better, <https://youtu.be/d0jEF66xSBA>

Assignment adapted from Poole (2019) & Dweck

References

- Draganski, B., Gaser, C., Busch, V., Schuierer, G., Bogdahn, U., & May, A. (2004). Changes in grey matter induced by training. *Nature*, 427(6972), 311-312.
- Dweck, C.S. (1999). *Self-Theories: Their role in motivation, personality and development*. Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis/Psychology Press.
- Dweck, C. S. (2008). Brainology: Transforming students' motivation to learn. *Independent School*, 67(2), 110-119.
- Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1998). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95, 256-273.

Instructions:

1. Review the following steps to use this week in order to move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset:
 - a. Learn to hear your mindset "voice" This week, try to become aware of the internal commentary that shows up when you are faced with difficulty, whether you have made a mistake, hit a setback, or received some form of external criticism..
 - b. Identify whether these thoughts represent a fixed or growth mindset. Your mind might be saying things like "I can't do this," "I'm not good enough," "I'm not smart enough," and "I failed last time so I will probably fail again." These types of thoughts come from a fixed mindset.
 - c. If you noticed fixed mindset commentary, you have the power to choose whether to continue with this mindset or to shift to a growth-oriented one. Mentally shift your perception of your ability and the difficulty in question to reflect a growth mindset. That is, respond to your fixed mindset commentary with growth mindset commentary. For example, "I am having difficulty with this task, but I can learn to master it with time and effort," "Most successful people have experienced failures along the way" and "The harder I try, the more likely I will be to succeed."
 - d. Act in line with your growth mindset. What kind of actions would reflect a growth mindset in this situation? For instance, a growth mindset leads to actions like approaching challenges and obstacles with enthusiasm and curiosity, interpreting failures as learning opportunities, learning from setbacks and trying again, and receiving criticism with an open mind.
 - e. See if you can take this/ these action(s). Just as with learning to ride a bike, the more we practice acting in line with a growth mindset, the more natural it becomes.
2. Record your steps on the [Mindset Challenge tracking form](#) for one week.
3. Complete the final reflection questions at the end of the week.

Physical Wellness Challenges

The leading cause of death and disability in the United States is chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Currently six in every ten American suffer from a chronic disease which accounts for the most significant healthcare expenditures in our country. The majority of premature death and illness related to chronic diseases can be tied to four major modifiable behaviors: physical activity, nutrition, alcohol consumption and tobacco use. Improving these

behaviors by enhancing physical health not only reduces rates of chronic illness but has been shown to have a positive impact on social and emotional wellbeing as well.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion," May 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/index.htm>

Sleep Challenge

Sleep serves many critical functions that allow our body to restore physical and mental energy. Inadequate sleep is linked to a host of health issues such as decreased cognitive function, drowsiness, weight gain, increased rate of infectious diseases, social conflicts and increases in depression and anxiety. It is recommended that adults get at least 7 hours of sleep for optimal health.

Instructions:

1. Set yourself a goal for the amount of sleep you will get each night.
2. Complete the [Sleep Challenge tracking form](#) on a daily basis
3. At the end of the week, complete the final reflection questions.
4. Consider the following tips and strategies as you work to improve not only the quantity but the quality of your sleep:
 - a. If possible create a schedule going to bed and waking up at the same time everyday.
 - b. Focus on relaxing leading up to your desired bedtime. Avoid screens for the hour prior to bedtime. Instead, read a book, listen to music, journal or meditate.
 - c. Avoid taking long naps (limit to 45 minutes at the most)
 - d. Alcohol, nicotine and caffeine can impact your ability to fall asleep as well as the quality of your sleep. Try to limit these, particularly in the evening.
 - e. Remove distractions (like electronics) from your room. Do your best to make the environment calm, cool, quiet and dark.

To find out more about the importance of sleep, check out this short video (5 min) <https://youtu.be/xxxWv6PM4EM>

References

Health Nerd (2016). 8 scientific benefits of sleep + sleeping tips, <https://youtu.be/xxxWv6PM4EM>

Get Active Challenge

Regular physical activity has been shown to have a positive effect on all aspects of health and wellness. Improvement in mental and emotional well-being are demonstrated by improved mood and ability to manage stress in those who are consistently active. Additionally, physical activity is associated with a decreased risk of death related to chronic disease. Conversely, physical inactivity increases the risk of many adverse health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

Instructions:

1. Based on your current level of physical activity, select one of the 3 options listed below to help set yourself a SMART goal to challenge yourself to move over the next week. Select one of the options below to create your goal.
2. Complete the [Get Active Challenge tracking form](#)
3. Answer the final reflection questions at the end of the week.

Option 1: New to exercise? Or looking to be more mindful when you move?

- Set aside time to briskly walk (without cell phone or other distractions) to meet the minimum recommended weekly minutes of moderate intensity activity (150 minutes total)
- The goal of doing this without distractions is to focus on simply “being” while moving.
- Consider splitting the activity up into short “breaks” (3x10 minutes a day / 5 days per week)

Option 2: Already active? Sweat and/or lift a little more!

- The American College of Sports Medicine provides the following guidelines to improve physical fitness and health outcomes:
 - Cardiorespiratory Endurance
 - 3-5 days per week
 - Intensity of 64-96% of maximum heart rate
 - 20-30 minutes at a time
 - Activities that continually use large muscle groups (ex: biking, swimming, running)
 - Muscular Fitness
 - 2-3 days per week
 - Lifting loads that are 60-80% of your maximal load
 - Complete 8-10 exercises targeting large muscle groups throughout the body
 - Complete 2-4 sets of 8-12 repetitions
 - Can be completed using body weight or external resistance (ex: dumbbells, resistance bands)
- Not quite meeting these guidelines in one of these fitness areas? Try setting a goal to reach these minimum recommended levels.
- Already there? Try to push yourself by creating a goal to challenge your fitness level a bit more. Examples include: Increasing the duration of your cardiorespiratory activity; target additional muscle groups when lifting weight.

Option 3: Flex your flexibility!

- The American College of Sports Medicine recommends working on flexibility at least 2-3 days per week, but ideally on a daily basis.
- This often the first area of fitness that gets neglected when people have limited time
- Set aside 10-15 minutes daily to focus on flexibility. You can do this through a combination of different activities (ex: static or dynamic stretching, yoga, use of props like stretch bands)

To find out more about the importance of exercise, check out this short video (6 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTL_bNvXJ9s

References

- Practical Wisdom - Interesting Ideas (2018.) 10 benefits of exercise on the brain and body - Why you need exercise. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTL_bNvXJ9s
- Garber, C. E., Blissmer, B., Deschenes, M. R., Franklin, B. A., Lamonte, M. J., Lee, I. M., Nieman, D. C., Swain, D. P., & American College of Sports Medicine (2011). American College of Sports Medicine position stand. Quantity and quality of exercise for developing and maintaining cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal, and neuromotor fitness in apparently healthy adults: guidance for prescribing exercise. *Medicine and science in sports and exercise*, 43(7), 1334–1359. <https://doi.org/10.1249/MSS.0b013e318213fe9b>
- Lee, I. M., Shiroma, E. J., Lobelo, F., Puska, P., Blair, S. N., Katzmarzyk, P. T., & Lancet Physical Activity Series Working Group (2012). Effect of physical inactivity on major non-communicable diseases worldwide: An analysis of burden of disease and life expectancy. *Lancet (London, England)*, 380(9838), 219–229. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)61031-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)61031-9)

Mindful Eating Challenge

People often come to the idea of improving their nutritional intake with a strict set of rules: “don’t” (eat sugar or fast food) or “do” (drink plenty of water, eat your veggies.) While moderating how much you do or don’t do these behaviors may have positive impacts on your physical health, an intense focus on restrictive rules can make dining a stressful situation. Additionally, it can lead to feelings of guilt and/or shame when an individual engages in the restricted behavior. Not only is this problematic for mental wellbeing but it often leads to increases in the undesired dietary behavior.

For this challenge, instead of creating a specific rule to follow to improve your nutritional habits you will work on practicing mindful eating, savoring and appreciating the process of eating.

To experience an exercise of mindful eating, check out this short video (3 min), https://youtu.be/C_IrfyiP88w [[Mindful Eating Exercise | Mindfulness Exercises | Aetna](#)]

References

- Aetna (2016). Mindful Eating Exercise, https://youtu.be/C_IrfyiP88w
- Nelson, J. B. (2017). Mindful Eating: The Art of Presence While You Eat. *Diabetes Spectrum*, 30(3), 171–174. <https://doi.org/10.2337/ds17-0015>

Instructions:

1. Complete the raisin-eating experience (outlined below) and/or follow along with the [Mindful Eating Exercise](#). If you do not have raisins in your home you could complete the activity with another small item of food such as a nut or small piece of candy.
 - a. Get a raisin and set it down in front of you. STOP; do not throw a handful of raisins into your mouth. (OK, so there is a rule, but there is a good reason, which you will understand soon.)
 - b. Imagine you have just been dropped off on this planet, and you know nothing about where you are. You have never experienced anything from Earth. With no experience, there are no judgments, fears, or expectations. It is all new to you. Take a few deep breaths and relax.
 - c. Look at the raisin and pick it up.
 - d. Feel its weight.
 - e. Examine its surface—the various ridges, shiny parts, dull parts; really look for the first time at this strange object.
 - f. Smell this object and notice how you react.
 - g. Roll the raisin between your fingers and listen to hear what sound it makes. Notice its stickiness.
 - h. Notice what you are feeling about this object.
 - i. Place the raisin between your lips and just hold it there for a few moments. What do you notice happens inside you?
 - j. Let it roll back into your mouth, but do not chew yet, just roll it around. Is there a taste? Do you salivate? What do you want to do?
 - k. OK, bite down, just once. What do you notice?
 - l. Slowly begin to chew, noticing what each bite brings.
 - m. Chew the raisin until it is completely liquefied before you swallow.
 - n. After swallowing, close your eyes for a few moments to notice the consequence of what you just experienced.
2. Complete the initial reflection on the [Mindful Eating Challenge tracking form](#)
3. Practice Mindful Eating over the next week. Ideally you should do this at all times but as start focus on it deeply at least once a day and fill in the different sections on the tracking form
4. At the end of the week complete the final reflection
5. Some tips:
 - a. Before reaching for something automatically, stop and take a moment to notice what you are feeling and what you might want to fill you up. Are you stressed, bored, angry, or sad? Are you lonely? Or, are you actually physically hungry? Be mindful of your reactivity and make a choice instead.
 - b. If your desire is not about hunger, do something else more appropriate for the desire.
 - c. Eat intentionally and only eat. Put away other distractions and pay attention to your food.
 - d. In addition to how you experience a food, consider what it took to bring this food to you. Who was involved in the growing process and production? Consider the

- sun and soil it took to grow the ingredients and ask yourself where in the world it came from. Appreciate all of what it took to bring it to your plate.
- e. Savor each bite the way you did the raisin in the earlier exercise.
 - f. After each bite, check in with your body to see how you are feeling. Have you had enough? Do you need more? Is it time to stop? Then move on to whatever you have chosen.

Pause and Plan Challenge

When we are faced with a choice to make what we might consider a “healthy” (go to the gym instead of stay on the couch) or “unhealthy” (smoke a cigarette instead of have a piece of gum) our body physically reacts to this conflict we are feeling between the instant gratification of what might feel best in the moment and what we know is in the best interest of our health. Our body reads this internal conflict as a stressor and shifts into a fight-or-flight state. While the physical reactions in response to this conflict may not be as pronounced as it is in other stressful situations (ex: job interview, being physically threatened) it nonetheless impairs our ability to focus on making the harder choice and not giving in to instant gratification.

When faced with a self-regulation challenge, one way to help calm your stress response and refocus on self-control is to pause and focus on slow deep breathing. Slow your breathing rate down to just 4-6 breaths per minute (approximately 10-15 seconds per breath.) Do not make a quick choice regarding a health challenge, instead use the breathing technique to calm your body, wait 3-5 minutes focusing on your long-term goals and then make a decision.

Check out this short video which talks about pausing to deal with strong emotions. Consider how you can use this technique when faced with a self-regulation challenge (1 min) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV5y_35Rvnl

References

- St. Louis DBT, LLC. (2017). 60 second skills: the S.T.O.P skill. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV5y_35Rvnl
- McGonigal, K. (2013.) *The willpower instinct: how self-control works, why it matters, and what you can do to get more of it*. First trade paperback edition. New York: Avery.

Instructions:

1. Identify common situations that you anticipate finding yourself faced with a choice between instant gratification and a long-term health reward and record those on the [Pause and Plan Challenge tracking form](#).
2. This week, use the pause and plan technique whenever faced with a self-control challenge.
3. Log those experiences on the tracking form.
4. At the end of the week, complete the final reflection questions.

