Dakota Wellness Program
April 2018
Inside this issue...
Empathy
Book club selection
Strengths
Metabolism
Online wellness portal
Self-compassion quiz
Sheet pan recipe
Empathy and compassion for stronger emotional well-being

Have you ever felt self-critical, wondering how some people seem to do it all when some days just getting out the door on time feels like a major accomplishment? Show yourself empathy and compassion instead of being critical of yourself.

Practicing empathy is to understand someone else’s perspective, or to put yourself in their shoes. Empathy helps to connect and relate to others. Neuroscience research shows that our ability to empathize is connected with self-control. Losing your cool with someone is a great example of poor self-control and not practicing empathy.

Compassion is showing kindness and care. When we understand where someone else is coming from (empathy), it is easier to care about or support others. Practicing empathy and gratitude cultivates compassion.

If a seed does not grow, it is not helpful to blame or criticize the seed, but instead, assess why it did not grow (empathy). Then provide the seed with the care it needs (compassion).

A common misconception is that practicing self-compassion is being weak, complacent, or selfish, deepening a cycle of negativity and isolation. Self-compassion is the opposite; it is taking care of yourself. If you can go beyond yourself and apply the same empathy and compassion techniques to others, it will also help you to strengthen your emotional well-being.

Next time you find yourself in a challenging situation, try this exercise:

Be aware of your feelings (physical or emotional), acknowledge the challenges with feeling the way you want to, and ask yourself what you can do in this moment to achieve a desired outcome.

If others are involved in the challenging situation, put yourself in their shoes and try to view their perspective. How can you show them kindness?

Book Club

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself

by Kristin Neff, Ph.D.

We are often our own toughest critics, creating a cloud of negative thoughts, emotions and beliefs. Learn how to limit your self-criticism and offset the negative affects you experience when you are critical of yourself.

Fulfillment, contentment and reaching your highest potential are just some of the benefits of incorporating self-compassion into your healthy lifestyle. Self-Compassion will help you develop an action plan and learn how to use self-compassion for a variety of topics including parenting and weight loss. You can also learn how practice compassion for others, develop resiliency and increase motivation.

Discussion questions

1. How does self-compassion and self-judgement influence your health and well-being?
2. How does compassion and judgement change your interactions with others?
3. How can you incorporate self-compassion into your day? When can you decrease judgement?
4. What exercise(s) in the book do you relate to most?
5. How has your perception of yourself in relation to others changed after reading this book?
Give it a try...

**Online wellness portal**

You can earn points toward your $250 NDPERS wellness benefit using the Sanford Health Plan online wellness portal. The portal features wellness challenges, programs and an online community to help you engage in your health in a new way.

- Earn 10,000 points ($100) by completing your LifeScore, Annual Physical and Dental Exam in 2018.
- Get rewarded for your healthy habits in challenges like Cardio Crush or Hydration. You are now able to backtrack your activity up to 14 days for certain challenges!
- Sync a fitness tracking device and join the Get Out and Move Challenge to automatically earn points.

**Redeem your wellness benefit**

To cash in your points or receive a fitness center reimbursement, you must complete a LifeScore in 2018. The health assessment is located in the wellness portal, in the Essential Care tab.

Visit sanfordhealthplan.com/memberlogin to get started today!

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**Use your strengths at work**

Your career well-being has the greatest impact on your overall well-being. Why? Because you spend most of your waking hours at work. If you can improve your life at work, then you can improve your overall life. One proven way to make your life at work happier, healthier and more productive is to make use of at least one strength each day.

A strength is defined as a pre-existing way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is energizing to the user. Also emphasized in the definition is that a strength enables optimal functioning, development and performance.

A strength is more than simply something you are good at. You may perform a task well, but it could drain your energy or bore you. It is those times you feel “in the zone,” “focused,” or experience “flow,” that you are truly using your strengths.

Make a point to notice your strengths and your co-workers’ strengths at work. Keep a running list of your strengths or take an online quiz to discover your strengths. Then identify how you can specifically use your strengths in your regular tasks and talk with your manager about new ways to incorporate your strengths.

CLICK HERE to take the character strengths quiz at viacharater.org.

**Metabolism**

The body’s process of using the energy taken in through food and converting it to energy that your body uses to function during your day is the process we call metabolism. Your resting metabolism is the energy used by the body to keep your heart beating, lungs breathing and organs functioning. The minimum amount of energy your body needs to carry out these processes is called the Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR).

We know that genetics play a factor in your metabolism and how much energy your body uses each day. BMR does decrease with age and tends to be higher in males. Most importantly, metabolism cannot be changed with supplements, special foods or drastic changes in your lifestyle. Focusing on or blaming metabolism for your weight gains or losses is not worthwhile. Your doctor is the best person to assess any changes to your health that may affect your metabolism.

The good news is, there are a few things that you can do to keep your body running efficiently and not disrupt the natural metabolism processes.

- Take every opportunity to get up and move
- Prevent muscle loss by strength training two days a week
- Pay attention to hunger cues and be mindful of the foods and portions you choose to eat
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep a night
Activate!

SELF-COMPASSION QUIZ

If you are ready to improve your emotional well-being and strengthen your acceptance of yourself, take this quiz from self-compassion.org to identify situations where you can improve self-compassion. Discover if you are low, moderate or high in self-compassion and how you rank in the six areas of self-treatment.

After the quiz, take time to explore self-compassion exercises that you can use in your everyday life. These activities include a self-compassion break, writing a letter to yourself, journaling and reframing practices. There are also guided meditations that you can listen to that may help you jump-start your self-compassion practice if you are finding it hard to quiet your inner voice.

CLICK HERE to take the self-compassion quiz

Sheet pan sausage and roasted vegetables

Serves: 4
Total Time: 55 min | Prep: 15 min | Cook: 40 min

Ingredients:
1 pound (12-15 spears) asparagus
1 large yellow or red pepper
2 medium sweet potatoes
1 large onion
1 package (12 ounces) of flavored or smoked, pre-cooked chicken or turkey sausage
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon dried thyme
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon black pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil

Directions:
Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Peel and dice sweet potatoes into one-inch cubes. Chop onion and peppers into bite sized one-inch pieces. Toss potatoes, onions and peppers in a bowl with all seasonings and 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Place on sheet pan and roast for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, slice sausage into bite sized pieces, trim asparagus, and cut into two-inch pieces. After 20 minutes of roasting, remove pan of potatoes, onions and peppers and use a spatula to flip and toss vegetables for even cooking, making sure nothing is sticking to the pan. Add sausage and asparagus to potato mixture. Add last tablespoon of olive oil and toss all ingredients together on sheet pan. Roast for an additional 15-20 minutes until potatoes are tender.

Nutrition Facts:
Calories: 345 | Total Fat: 20g | Sodium: 675mg | Total Carbohydrates: 28g
Dietary Fiber: 5g | Total Protein: 17g

Nutrition information compiled using nutritiondata.com

Monthly Observances
Autism
Cancer Control
Counseling
Distracted Driving
Irritable Bowel Syndrome
Stress
5—Alcohol Screening
15-21—Volunteer Week
16—Health Care Decisions
21-28—Infant Immunization
22—Earth Day

Find a complete list of observances at healthfinder.gov/NHO

QUICK LINKS
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NDPERS/dakotawellnessprogram

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