Dakota Wellness Program
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Inside this issue...
Love your job
Book club selection
Your brain and stress
Financial defaults
Power poses
Dream job
Parmesan garden tomatoes
Grow to love your work

It consumes most of our waking hours. It defines our identities. Our families may even be structured to accommodate it. What is it? WORK. With the right expectations, work is also a powerful contributor to total well-being.

To shape our mindset for loving work, we must first examine our expectations. A common myth is that our work should fit us throughout our lives. Let’s bust that myth right now. There is no one perfect job for you. There is a job that’s nearly perfect for you right now.

Let’s explore the first important word in our new expectation, “nearly.” There will always be parts of our work that we love more than others. Challenge yourself to actively notice which parts of work are energizing and which parts are draining. With that knowledge, create a structure for tasks and breaks that keep your energy in a pleasant range.

Let’s explore the second important part of our new expectation, “right now.” You are always learning, growing and changing. In other words, you are always on your way to becoming someone new! Work that fit your teens and twenties may not fit who you are in your fifties. Aid the change by trying out new challenges or roles that fit who you are. Talk with your work associates and supervisor to share your special skills, knowledge and attributes. This may lead to a discovery of new roles you can play in your current work position.

To actively engage in who you are right now, try the imagination exercise in the Activate! section of this newsletter.

Book Club

How to Find Fulfilling Work
by Roman Krznaric

How would you describe your feelings about your work day? This book is a guide to help you examine your career and drive your work life in a purposeful direction. Fulfilling work, not just work to make ends meet, is a goal of many. There is no such thing as a dream job, but assessing what you need in your work life can help you improve your career well-being. How to Find Fulfilling Work will help you to look at your career choices, personal ambitions and motivations, and take steps to finding a career in which you can thrive.

Discussion questions

1. Which of the five dimensions of meaning has most influenced your working life?
2. Which do you value more from your work, freedom or security?
3. What talents do you bring to your job?
4. Do you have a best friend at work?
5. Where are you most often in a “flow state” during your workday?
Give it a try...

Power poses

Body language can help you be more successful and foster stronger relationships both at work and in your personal life. Here are a few ways you can use body language to boost your confidence.

- **Strike a power pose.** Before presenting or speaking in front of a group, stand with your arms out wide and legs shoulder width apart. Look up while opening up your chest. Try to hold this pose for at least one minute.

- **When speaking in a meeting,** create a steeple shape with your hands by putting your fingertips together, keeping palms apart. Studies show that this motion gives the illusion that you are confident about the certain topic. Politicians do this often.

- **Smile.** Smiling increases feelings of well-being and people prefer smiling faces to other expressions. This lets people know you are friendly and approachable.

Toxic stress

Everyone experiences stress at some point in life. It is normal and expected. In small doses, stress hormones can help us perform at our best. But what happens when you are exposed to stress for long periods of time with few breaks?

Toxic stress can cause damage to the brain and body at all ages. The younger the brain, the more damage excessive stress has. During the teen years and early adulthood, exposure to toxic stress will generate higher sensitivity to stressful situations of any kind, and a more powerful and lasting stress response. Exposure to toxic stress during adulthood will exaggerate the ageing process and affect memory, cognition and emotion. Migraines and weight gain can be a sign of having too much of certain stress hormones.

To try and avoid toxic stress, surround yourself with loving people. Support goes a long way in aiding in a healthy stress response. Find an escape from your stress and strengthen your brain with a healthy diet, regular exercise, and through practicing mindfulness.

Financial defaults

Setting up financial defaults can be a simple step to boost your financial well-being. The idea of a default is to automatically move your financial resources into a planned place, and utilize what you have left after this transfer takes place to pay for your expenses. You may even start to forget about this financial default as you grow more comfortable with seeing less in your account for daily expenses. A savings account, retirement fund or regular cash withdrawal to save up for a specific event are examples of healthy financial defaults.

A healthy financial well-being starts with an automatic transfer on pay day into your savings account. This could be as low as $20 to start, over the course of a year it adds up to $520 dollars saved.

Opting in to have your retirement savings taken out of your paycheck is also another healthy default. Another smart option is to increase your retirement contribution each year when you receive a salary increase.

Set up an automatic payment to any credit or other debt for the day after you are paid. This will help you stay on track to pay down debts and not spend the money on other items.
Baked parmesan tomatoes
Serves: 4
Total time: 20 min | Prep: 5 min

Ingredients:
4 garden fresh large tomatoes
1 tablespoon fresh chopped or dried basil
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
Black pepper to taste
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese
4 teaspoons olive oil

Directions:
Pre-heat oven to 450 degrees. Cut tomatoes horizontally into half inch slices. Place on baking sheet and top with basil, black pepper and parmesan cheese. Drizzle with olive oil. Bake until tomatoes are tender and cheese has browned, about 15 minutes.

Nutrition Facts:
Calories: 100 Total Fat: 7 g Sodium: 105 mg Total Carbohydrates: 7 g
Dietary Fiber: 2 g Total Protein: 4g

Nutrition information computed using nutritiondata.com

Activate!
Engage in your career
Start by imagining a job you think would be fun to have. What job would you want? Describe in one word why that job appeals to you. Repeat this process three times, creating three different options.

1. Do all three options share anything in common or are they very different from one another?

2. If they share a common theme, you just identified something you need from your work! See if you can begin to integrate that need by trying out a new hobby. For instance, if your choices included rock climber, entrepreneur and explorer, you might crave more adventure in your life. You don’t need to quit your job to meet this need. Instead, look for a new hobby or activity that addresses that need.

3. If the three results don’t seem to share a common theme, you may crave variety. Choose the option from your three that you’d want most and start to explore hobbies that offer a similar experience to that job. For instance, if your top choice is doctor, consider volunteering a few hours at your local hospital.