Dakota Wellness Program

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The connection between inflammation and major diseases such as heart disease, Type II diabetes, degenerative and autoimmune diseases, chronic pain, obesity and even depression is currently being researched. Normally, inflammation helps heal the body in response to infection, pain or distress, but it can become problematic if the body has an overactive or chronic response, which can damage tissue, leading to or worsening disease.

Lifestyle interventions are safe and effective strategies for a healthy inflammatory response.

Food can create or resolve inflammation. A review of anti-inflammatory diets found that many focus on the following areas:

- Reducing high sugar foods and trans fatty acids that increase inflammation
- Increasing foods containing nutrients the body requires to clear inflammation such as fresh fruits and vegetables, high fiber foods like whole grains and beans, and healthy unsaturated fats
- Incorporating certain spices and herbs into your diet that can block inflammatory pathways such as ginger, black pepper, turmeric, cinnamon and garlic

Physical activity reduces stress hormones and fat cells that produce inflammation. It may temporarily increase inflammation, but results in an anti-inflammatory process when done appropriately.

- Make a plan to meet the minimum physical activity guidelines for your age and health.
- Evaluate time spent sitting. Be sure to get up and move your body throughout the day.
- Allow recovery time after strenuous physical activity. Overdoing it can promote inflammation.

Stress hormones also activate the inflammatory process.

- Be aware of your physical response to day to day stressors.
- Practice healthy stress coping strategies.

Book Club

The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World’s Healthiest People by Dan Buettner

Dan Buettner has studied the world’s longest-lived people for over a decade. In The Blue Zones Solution, you will find inspiration from the healthiest centenarians from around the world and learn more about environmental changes US cities and towns have made to improve the health of their citizens. Drawing from research and the daily rituals of centenarians, this book can help you start to build your own personal blue zone and eat like the world’s healthiest people.

Discover flavorful dishes from Greece, Italy and Costa Rica as part of the 77 traditional and adapted recipes found in the book. Try out the recommended food rituals and food choices for longevity, along with lists of superfoods. The Blue Zones Solution can help you design your personal plan for improved health, reduced inflammation and refreshed eating habits.

Discussion questions

1. Which of the blue zone communities from part one did you identify with the most?
2. What is one idea you could implement in your workplace from the US blue zones projects?
3. Which blue zone food guidelines are you personally going to implement?
4. How do you plan to “blue zone” your home and environment?
Give it a try...

Celebrate by giving back

Give a gift that will benefit yourself and others for your next birthday, anniversary or holiday. Give back your time or money instead of buying a traditional gift or throwing a party.

- Donate money: Instead of buying a material item, donate the money you would normally spend on a gift to the recipient’s favorite charity.
- Donate time: Celebrate with friends and family by volunteering your time together. Volunteering connects you in a different way than a regular celebration can.

Activate!

True Vitality Test
Overwhelmed by all the health information out there? Reducing inflammation and chronic disease can be made simpler by assessing where you are today. The three-minute True Vitality Test will give you customized recommendations on how to add up to ten years to your life. Using the lessons learned from studying the healthiest people from around the world, this test will help you apply inflammation fighting lifestyle changes like eating healthier foods, incorporating movement into your daily activity and reducing stress.

Visit apps.bluezones.com/en/vitality to learn more about adding years to your life through changes in your nutrition, exercise, and emotional, social, community and career well-being.

Planning for the future
Creating a will can be a difficult conversation and task, but the benefits of setting up a will generally outweigh these uneasy feelings. Don’t think of your will planning as a sad event, but as a way to take care of those that mean the most to you and decrease their worry and stress. A will is a written document, signed and witnessed, indicating your wishes in the event of your death. This includes instructions on distribution of financial assets and guardianship of children. A will is also a place to make health care decisions, like a health care agent, or advanced directive (also called a living will).

There are will planning professionals and online will writing software available to assist you in planning for the future. But before you start writing, think about those you trust to make health care decisions, manage your financial resources or care for your children. Talk with these people, in person if possible, and inform them of your wishes. This conversation may be difficult, but it will help ensure that these people feel comfortable with the responsibility and that your wishes are carried out as best as possible. After the will is written, keep it in a secure place such as a fire proof safe and give a copy to someone you trust. Once established, it’s important to continue to update your will every five years to make sure it is still an accurate reflection of your wishes.

For more information on advanced health care planning, visit the National Institutes of Health at nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/advanced-care-planning.
**Life philosophies**

What’s your life philosophy? Tough question, right? If you intentionally make time to craft a life philosophy, you will shape your outlook toward difficult moments that may arise in your life. You’ll also have a guide to be more clear and intentional about how you engage with life.

To clarify your philosophy, consider the following questions:

1. If you had to design a bumper sticker that describes your outlook on life, what would it say?
2. What would you most like to be remembered for?
3. Who’s someone you admire? What do you think their life philosophy might be?

Expand on your answers above by adding details provided by your senses. Consider how you’d like to use your time and attention to experience the world. What and how do you want to see, touch, taste, smell and hear? For example, how would you like to engage with the meals you eat? Would you prefer to have them quickly so you can move to the next task or more slowly so you can enjoy the flavors and textures of your food?

By taking the time to craft a life philosophy, you’ll have created a guide to see and interact with the world and provide clarity in your daily life’s goals.

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**Black bean brownies**

Serves: 16  
Total Time: 70 min | Prep: 10 min | Cook: 30 min

**Ingredients:**
- 1 15 oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed thoroughly
- 3 large eggs
- ¼ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup honey
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup dark chocolate chips

**Directions:**
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place all ingredients (except the chocolate chips) in a food processor and blend until smooth. Pour the batter into a greased 8x8 baking dish. Sprinkle the chocolate chips over the top of the batter. Bake for 25-27 minutes. Let cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing into squares.

**Nutrition Facts:**
- Calories: 145  
- Total fat: 4g  
- Sodium: 118mg  
- Total carbohydrate: 25g  
- Dietary fiber: 4g  
- Total protein: 5g