

# BALANCED Living



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## JOT THIS DOWN: JOURNALING CAN BOOST YOUR WELL-BEING

For better health and well-being, you already know the basics: eat well, exercise, drink lots of water and get plenty of sleep. But there's something else you should add to the list that can create major benefits: journaling.

Research shows that regularly writing down what's on your mind can help you release emotions and process what's going on in your life. It can also help improve your relationships with others, lower your blood pressure and decrease symptoms of depression.

### THERE IS NO 'WRITE' WAY

There are many different ways to journal; You could write about your thoughts and feelings or use your journal to help problem-solve. Try taking a big problem that you're facing and break it down into smaller, more manageable parts, you can then tackle the smaller parts one at a time so the issue no longer feels so overwhelming.

Another option when journaling is jotting down a few things that you are grateful for. Shifting your focus from your daily stresses to gratitude can help lower stress, improve your mood, boost the quality of your sleep and even reduce inflammation in your body.

### PUT PEN TO PAPER

The key is to find what feels right for you. In order to make journaling a part of your daily routine, try linking it with a habit that you already do. For example, after brushing your teeth, take a few minutes to write in your journal. Over time, writing will become automatic and beneficial, just like reaching for your toothbrush.

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# KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL Relationship

A relationship is based on love and respect and both partners have to do their part. Below are some important keys to work on each day to make your relationship successful.

## COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND OFTEN.

Talking with your partner is one of the best ways to keep your relationship healthy and successful. Be honest about what you're feeling, but be kind and respectful when you communicate. Part of good communication is being a good listener and taking the time to understand what it is your partner wants and needs from you. Keep the lines of communication open by talking often about your thoughts and feelings.

## TELL YOUR PARTNER THAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR THEM.

Appreciate each other, your relationship, your families and your lives together. Show gratitude when your partner cooks dinner, helps the kids with their homework or does the grocery shopping. It may help to take a few minutes each evening to tell each other at least one thing you appreciated that day.

## PLAN FOR SOME PERSONAL TIME.

Alone time is just as important as couple time. Everyone needs time to recharge, think and enjoy personal interests. Go out with friends, take a class or do volunteer work, whatever you find enriching. When you're back together with your partner, you'll appreciate each other even more.

## LEARN TO FORGIVE.

Everyone makes mistakes. Your partner may hurt your feelings or do something that upsets you, and that may make you angry. But it is important to recognize your feelings, let them go and move on.

You, your partner and your relationship may grow and change with time, but these ideas can help your relationship stay successful over the years.

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## How to Prevent HEART DISEASE

Your heart is a vital organ that keeps your body functioning. But many people don't treat it that way. They may not realize that their daily habits and lifestyle can overwork and damage their hearts. So, take care of your heart and yourself.

Start by making these lifestyle changes:

**Eat heart-friendly foods.** Eating fatty foods plays a part in the buildup of fat in your arteries. This can lead to blocked arteries of your heart and increases the risk for a heart attack. Limit fatty meats, whole-milk products and fried foods. Instead, choose nonfat milk or low-fat dairy products. Choose healthier cooking oils made with unsaturated fats, such as canola, avocado, grape seed, corn and olive oils. But since they are fat, use them in limited amounts. Also try to eat 2 cups of fruit, whole-grain and high-fiber foods, and 2.5 cups of vegetables every day.

Here are some examples of heart-friendly foods:

- **Leafy green vegetables (spinach and kale)**
- **Whole grains (brown rice and oats)**
- **Berries (strawberries and blueberries)**
- **Fatty fish (salmon, tuna and sardines)**
- **Walnuts, almonds and chia seeds**
- **Avocados and dark chocolate**

**Set exercise goals.** Exercise gets your heart pumping. This helps your body use oxygen better and makes your heart stronger. It can also decrease your blood pressure and the amount of fat in your blood. Start your exercise program slowly, especially if you haven't been active for a while. Start with short sessions, such as 10-minute walks. Gradually increase the length of your workouts to at least 30 to 40 minutes, 4 to 5 days a week. Experts recommend getting at least 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity per week for substantial health benefits. Talk with your healthcare provider before starting or changing an exercise program.

**Watch your blood pressure.** Make sure your blood pressure is in a healthy range. Making smart lifestyle choices such as eating a diet low in sodium, exercising regularly, staying away from tobacco and alcohol and reducing stress will decrease your risk of high blood pressure.

**Reduce stress.** Continued and high stress has been consistently linked to health problems. These include an increased risk for heart problems. Anger is tightly linked with the risk of cardiac issues. Common ways of dealing with stress, such as overeating and smoking, can further harm your heart. Try to keep your stress levels low by exercising, sharing your concerns with friends and family and making some quiet time for yourself each day. Spending 15 - 20 minutes every day doing something you enjoy is a simple but effective step towards a less stressful life.

If you feel like you need a little extra support, reach out to Continuum EAP and schedule a session with a Continuum professional to talk about coping skills and information specifically related to your situation.

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## 4 TIPS TO STAY ACCOUNTABLE to Your Fitness Goal

Is working out one of your new year's resolutions, but you're already fearing your usual excuses? Here are some tips to hold you accountable when you're tempted to turn on Netflix instead of hitting the treadmill:

- 1 MAKE A PLAN.** By making detailed plans about how, when and where you will achieve your goals, you'll be more likely to actually meet them. Check out your schedule for tomorrow and commit to a time to exercise.
- 2 DOWNLOAD A FITNESS APP.** Smartphones make it seriously hard to avoid fitness accountability, considering we're always looking at them. There are lots of free apps, but consider buying one — research shows more expensive apps tend to use more effective techniques.
- 3 BUDDY UP.** Ask family and friends to join you in your pursuit of a fitter body. You'll be more likely to stick with your goals if you have someone else to hold you to your word.
- 4 KEEP A RECORD.** Log your activity daily. Reward yourself with an amazing experience or treat when you meet milestones.

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# EXERCISING in the Cold



Cold weather doesn't have to put a freeze on your outdoor exercise program. If you are careful, you can still work out when the weather turns chilly.

Here are some things to keep in mind when exercising in the cold weather.

## Wear the right clothing

Clothing is critical. Although a double-thick cotton sweatshirt may seem like a good choice, it doesn't insulate nearly as well as synthetic fabrics like lightweight polyester, polypropylene or moisture-wicking materials.

Don't overdress. You can overheat even in below-freezing temperatures. If you dress too warmly, you'll sweat a lot. Then, when cold winds hit, perspiration will rapidly evaporate, chilling you. You want to limit perspiration and keep it away from both your skin and the outside air.

## Layering is key

Wear a synthetic material against your skin. This will let the sweat pass through the fabric away from your body. The second layer should be wool, polyester or fleece for primary insulation. The third layer should be chosen for its ability to keep out the cold air, wind and rain. This layer should be something lightweight and synthetic.

Layering also helps regulate your temperature. If you get too warm, you can take a layer off.

## Heads up

You can lose a tremendous amount of heat through your uncovered head, so wear a hat, cap or hood.

Your feet get cold first. Make sure to wear the right boots or shoes. Insulate them with warm socks and keep them dry.

Because of the large surface area and volume, your hands are also more susceptible to the cold. Gloves or mittens should be worn before the hands become cold. Choose mittens over gloves, because the fingers can warm each other and the mitten decreases the exposed surface area.



## Don't forget fluids

If you can see your breath, you're seeing moisture leave your body. So drink plenty of fluids, particularly if the air is cold and dry. Drink water before you go out, and bring some with you.

## Don't overdo it

Cold weather is a stress on the body, and so is exercise. Together they may be too much for someone not in the best of health.

## Other cold-weather tips:

- Warming up before exercising is always important, but even more so when it gets cold.
- If you drive to where you are exercising, make sure your car is equipped with emergency supplies, such as a blanket and a portable charger.
- If the weather is particularly cold, it's probably too cold for you to exercise outdoors. If you do have to go out in the extreme cold, cover all exposed skin to prevent frostbite. Know the symptoms of hypothermia, such as shivering, tiredness, paleness and confusion.
- Cold air doesn't damage the lungs. Even very cold air is warmed to body temperature by the time it hits the lungs. But for some people with asthma, cold air can trigger an attack.