

Healthy U @ Work

December 2018

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The Power of Now

There is no doubt that most of us are busy and feeling the stress of our to do list. But, did you know a proven way to be more productive, happier, and in tune with your own needs is to practice living in the present. What does it really mean to be in the “now,” without worrying about the past or the future?

Being present means focusing on what is in front of you, right now. Whether it is checking your email, completing a job at work or having a conversation with your spouse, giving your focus to what is right in front of you without the distractions of past experiences or future task, will free your mind and allow you to be more productive. The distractions of worrying about the past or future are the same as the distractions of multitasking (doing more than one thing at a time): it makes you less effective. A study out of Stanford confirmed that people who are chronic multitaskers are less productive than those who focus on one thing at a time.

Being present can make you happier. Being in the moment will increase your awareness and ability to appreciate the people around you and the moments of quiet or joy that often fly by as we are thinking about something else. Being present can help you manage problems with less stress and experience more gratitude. Thinking about the past events or mistakes can create guilt. Thinking about future choices or circumstances can create worry.

Being present can help you know what you really want. Whether you are choosing what to eat or making a major life decision, being in the moment - without any distractions - can help you tune into that inner voice of truth. For many of us, emotional eating is a problem. By taking a moment, you may discover if you are truly hungry and what exactly you are hungry for. Many times, you may find that you are not hungry but feeling sad, frustrated, angry or lonely. Acknowledging these feelings can help you stop the emotional eating.

Taking time to remember or reflect on the past can be enjoyable and important, and planning and dreaming about the future is necessary. But taking time to be present can make your holiday season less stressful and more joyful. And isn't that the best present of all?



Understanding Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system. The immune system attacks the fatty substance that surrounds nerve fibers (myelin) in the spinal cord, causing a breakdown in the communication between nerve endings and the brain. Though a specific cause for the disease is not known, there are risk factors you should know about. It is thought that certain environmental factors play a role, such as smoking, low levels of vitamin D, and exposure to certain viruses and bacteria. Continued research is needed to pinpoint direct causes of the disease. More women than men develop MS and those of Northern European descent are at the highest risk.

MS is diagnosed by a thorough neurological exam as well as tests to rule out other diseases and illnesses that can present symptoms similar to MS. Symptoms include tingling or pain in parts of the body, weakness in legs or arms, numbness, tingling or pain, and possible paralysis, fatigue, mood changes, vision problems (especially in one eye), dizziness, or slurred speech. An MRI is commonly used to examine changes in the brain or spinal cord, called lesions, that are common with MS. Another possible test is an examination of spinal fluid, which can reveal an autoimmune response in the central nervous system. There are four types, or stages, of MS. For most, MS will be a disease marked by flare of symptoms along with periods of remission. There are a variety of treatments for this stage that work to help lengthen remission time.

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Produce of the Month

Spinach

Spinach is an amazing superfood. While it is becoming more common in the modern American diet, many of us undervalue its nutritional punch. In the days of cartoon hero Popeye, when a can of spinach was the source of his amazing strength, spinach was more regularly served as a side dish, one most mothers insisted that kids finish! Well, Mom was right about the health benefits of spinach. Spinach contains over 13 different antioxidants that may help protect against cancer, promote heart health and reduce inflammation in the body.

The Basics: Spinach is available year-round and can be purchased fresh, canned or frozen. Canned or frozen spinach is best used in a specific recipe than as a side dish. You will want to squeeze out as much water as possible, before adding to your recipe. Fresh spinach will come loose or bagged. Like other greens, spinach should have a deep color and look fresh, not wilted or bruised. Store your unwashed spinach in a bag in the refrigerator. When ready, wash your spinach well and if you are using the spinach in a salad, dry it gently. For cooked spinach, you can sauté it, steam it, bake it in a pasta recipe or do a quick boil (approximately 1 minute).

Try This: Instead of creamed spinach, which can be high in saturated fat, try sautéing your spinach in some olive oil with minced garlic. Top with some fresh lemon juice or balsamic vinegar and grated Parmesan cheese. Try adding a handful of raw spinach to your favorite fruit smoothie for a nutritional boost!

The Facts: One cup of raw spinach is approximately 7 calories with 1 gram of fiber and 1 gram of protein. Spinach delivers more than half the day's requirement of Vitamin A and is an excellent source of folate, iron, Vitamin C, calcium and potassium.

Importance of Portion Size

You've heard you need to control your portions, yes? Did you know why? Here are reasons why portion size matters.

- Larger portions - on your plate, in your bowl, in a bag - make you eat more! Even if you are not part of the "clean plate club," having a larger portion in front of you will cause you to eat more at a sitting.
- Larger portions cause you to lose perspective. If you become accustomed to the largest drink or triple burger, the smaller sizes will seem, well...small! You can develop a lack of satisfaction with healthy portions over time.
- Larger portions will include more calories. Okay, that may be obvious. But this can create serious health problems. When you eat more calories than you burn, you are more likely to gain weight and increase your risk for heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.
- Smaller portions allow your body to process the food optimally and absorb needed nutrients. Smaller portions will help keep blood sugars more stable, reduce the likelihood of indigestion, and will help keep heartburn and reflux under control.

It is clearly healthier for your body to keep portions to a modest size. Getting used to smaller portions doesn't mean getting used to being hungry. In fact, letting hunger dictate the portion size - and not the size of the plate or cup - will actually help you reduce the amount you eat. You can try using smaller dishes to serve yourself and fill up on high fiber vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to keep hunger at bay. You will feel lighter and healthier and possibly save a little money as well!



Portion Size vs. Serving Size – A serving size is the amount of food or liquid recommended to be eaten, like on a food label. Portion size is the amount food or drink you decide to eat at one time which may be more than one serving size.

What is healthy serving? The USDA has provided guidelines for "eyeballing" proper serving sizes:

- A half cup of chopped vegetables looks like half a baseball
- A full cup of green, leafy vegetables looks like a complete baseball
- A medium fruit is about the size of a baseball and a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of chopped fruit looks like half of a baseball
- A quarter cup of dried fruit is about the size of a golf ball
- A half cup of rice is about the size of half a baseball
- A 3-ounce serving of meat looks like a deck of cards
- 2 ounces of cubed raw cheese resembles 4 dice

Measuring your portions just once or twice can help you better "eyeball" portions. If you know that you normally serve yourself a cup of rice, you can track that you had two servings of rice. This will help you better understand if you are meeting or exceeding your nutrition needs.

Snow Shoveling Safety

While shoveling snow can be a great workout, it can come with its own risks. What makes the activity so risky? Shoveling snow or pushing a snow blower can be as strenuous as running at full speed on a treadmill and puts strain on the heart. Cold weather also increases blood pressure and impacts blood flow and risk of blood clots. Reduce your risk of injury or heart attack while shoveling snow this cold season by taking a few precautions and listening to your body.

Warm-up prior to the activity: Just like any physical endeavor, warming up your body to prepare it for the activity is a safe idea. For the most effective warm-up, consider what movements you will naturally do with the activity and make them less intense to begin safely preparing your body for the work. Some good exercises would be to: mimic shoveling without the shovel and snow; stretching and moving your arms to gain range of motion; get your heart rate up with some brisk walking; complete some arm pulses to wake up your shoulders; and do some lunges or squats to warm up your legs.

Prepare properly: Choose an ergonomically designed, plastic shovel to make the job easier. The lighter plastic, rather than metal, cuts down on the weight of the load, and an ergonomic shovel will cater to the way you move. Make sure to dress in layers so you can easily adjust your body temperature and wear a scarf over your mouth or a facemask to protect your lungs from the cold. Finally, bring out water to keep you hydrated while you work.

Practice effective technique: Shovel early, often, and take breaks. Plan to shovel the snow either in bouts (if it is going to snow for a long time), or right after it has finished snowing when the snow is lighter. Try to push your load rather than lift and empty, and avoid too much weight on your shovel at a time. Always lift with your legs rather than your back, and wear a back support if necessary. Take breaks as needed and don't work until exhaustion.

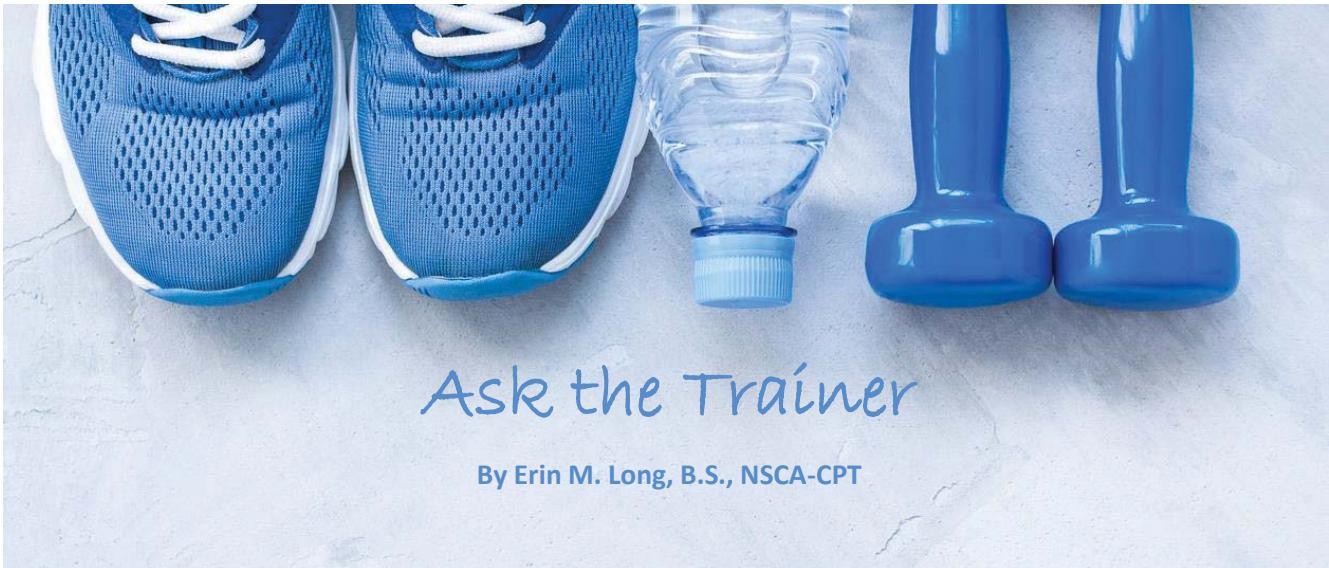
Additional safety tips: Remember there is no shame in asking for help or delegating the task to someone else if you aren't feeling up to it. If you live alone or know you have a condition that may be aggravated by the activity, bring your cell phone out with you. If you start to get overheated or experience shortness of breath, tightness in your chest, or a racing heart stop and head inside for a break. If you think you are having a heart attack, call 911 immediately.



Understanding Multiple Sclerosis

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Many people live well with MS by combining medical treatments with a holistic lifestyle approach. Reducing stress, eating a healthy diet, and getting regular exercise can help reduce flare-ups. Some patients benefit from physical or occupational therapy. Listening to the body is critical for MS patients. It is important to rest when needed and learn to be patient during the ebbs and flow of the disease. Finally, having a strong support system can help the MS patient emotionally and physically. MS patients should work with their medical team to establish a course of treatment that works best for them.



Ask the Trainer

By Erin M. Long, B.S., NSCA-CPT

Q: Hey Erin! I set a goal for myself 9 months ago to lose 45lbs and through watching my food and exercise I currently have reached that goal. With the holidays coming up and having worked so hard I was wondering if you have any suggestions on how to maintain over the holidays now that I have reached my goal weight?
Gloria B.

A: Wow Gloria! Congratulations on reaching your goal, that is amazing and such a great accomplishment. After working so hard to accomplish your goal the last thing you want to do is go backwards or lose that motivation that you've had during this process. The first thing I would recommend would be to set a new goal to guide you through the new year. If your goal is to maintain your weight, let's make a plan to help you be successful.

Without knowing how often you were working out and what exactly you were eating here are some ideas. I would try to do at least 30 minutes of exercise almost every day including cardio and strength throughout the week. During the holidays we have parties, family gatherings, work get togethers, etc. Planning ahead for these events will be key! When you have one of these events, I recommend either doing a longer workout or maybe slipping in an extra one that day. This will rev up your metabolism and help keep your body from storing any extra calories you may consume. Make sure you drink plenty of water, maybe even a little more than usual. Try to eat as clean as possible that day, lots of veggies, lean meats, etc. You don't want to skip meals just cut back on calories a little bit and no processed, high sugar or high fat foods. Remember, it's ok to enjoy a little treat every once in a while, and if you are like me there are one or two things I like to eat over the holidays. I will enjoy them in moderation but not let them allow me to go back to old habits. It may be helpful to keep a food diary on the wellness portal to keep yourself accountable.

Once you have met your goal to maintain your weight over the holiday season, it will be time to set another goal for yourself. A great idea for setting a new health or fitness goal going for the new year is think of something fun you want to do. I have many people who want to run a 5K or do an obstacle race, learn to dance or get strong enough to do a pull up or two. Allow yourself to relax a little bit too. You've worked hard to accomplish your goal so you don't want to become lax with your fitness and nutrition but it's not necessary to be hard on yourself either. Keep up your hard work and good things will continue to happen.
Dedicated to your success,

December 2018

By: Betsy Robbins, LMFT, EAP Therapist

Are You Self-Aware? Time to Practice Self Care!

Happy Holidays! Like the song says, “It’s the most wonderful time of the year” ...or is it? Planning and shopping and wrapping and parties and family gatherings and baking and cooking and eating and, and, and, and WHEW! Most people report feeling exhausted and frustrated from mid-November through the New Year. Many say they even resent the holidays and are relieved to see them end. Are you one of those folks? If so, this time of year more than ever, is the time to be self-aware and start thinking and planning self-care! Somehow, when people make their lists of things that they want/need to do, they leave themselves off the list and neglect self-care.

For those who care give for others, be it in the workplace or at home with children or other family members, self-care should be a priority. Most people say that they feel “guilty” or “selfish” if they think about taking care of their own needs. Think about it from a place of awareness instead. There is nothing selfish about taking care of yourself...rather, there is something empowering about being self-aware and knowing what you need to do in order to sail through the holidays (and life) on a joyful note. *For, if you cannot take care of yourself, how can you expect to take care of others?*

Look at it like you are a car. Your vehicle cannot run without gas. You can go wherever you want if there is enough gas in your tank but if you drive the car without filling the tank, eventually, you will run out of gas! Self-care is the art of keeping your tank full so that you can get to wherever you want.

Take time for yourself and rethink your priorities. Think about these categories as needing attention from you: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, financial, spiritual, occupational and environmental. Try to assess each one of those categories and come up with ideas about things that you could be doing to strengthen each one of them. People in your care as well as YOU, will prosper in mind, body and spirit as a result of your caregiving if, and only if, you have “gas in your tank”!

Need help with Self-Care?

Call your EAP at

219-662-3730 or -800-747-7262

Self-Care and 9 Step Strategy to Maintaining Your Weight during the Holidays December 19

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The logo features a stylized 'F' icon followed by the words "Franciscan" and "WORKING Well". The "W" in "Working" is stylized with a blue checkmark or swoosh through it.

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