

COMPLETELY WELL



Lifestyle

It's Your Valentine's Day

In This Issue: National Wear Red Day, Meditation, Healthy Stews, It's Your Valentine's Day, My TV is My Trainer, Fennel, Ask the Trainer



The stores are awash in pink and red hearts, and you may already be feeling the pressure to have a Valentine's surprise ready for your spouse, a dear friend, your children. It's fun to find the right card, buy the perfect chocolates or bake someone's favorite cookies. But, in the midst of it all, someone important may be forgotten. We may have forgotten a little self-love.

The idea of loving oneself is corny to most, even uncomfortable. Maybe it conjures the image of a self-centered person or sound too "touchy-feely." It may be more accurate and more palatable to call it "self-care" instead. The love we have for our family and friends is almost always expressed in the care we offer them. We work to pay the bills, cook, clean, chauffeur to school and activities, listen, encourage and sympathize. These are acts of love we give to those around us. But how do we care for ourselves? Too often, we work too hard, skip a meal, drive ourselves crazy with everyone else's schedule and don't listen to our bodies and minds begging us to slow down, relax, recharge. Would you allow your children to eat the way you do? Get the amount of sleep you do? Deal with stress the way you do?

If you were to think about someone you love right now, could you think of something about that person you don't like? For most of us, the answer is yes! Of course, there are habits or traits of family members and friends that can drive us crazy, but we accept them just the same. Sometimes we are even able to look at those wearisome traits and find humor in them. Whether it's a husband's socks left on the floor, a wife's perpetual lost keys or a friend's regular tardiness, we accept who they are and love them just

the same. Can you do that for yourself? When you've made a mistake - missed an appointment, burned dinner, forgotten a birthday - do you forgive yourself as easily as you would a family member or friend? Do you accept your imperfections with the same warmth and understanding?

There's no doubt that we often treat others better than we treat ourselves. We value others' time more than our own and are more concerned about our family's health than our own. The idea, then, is to begin to treat ourselves with the same respect, care and value that we give to those we love. Self-love, or self-care, is about raising your personal value, and that begins with a little self-respect. Respect how important you are to so many around you and how you deserve to feel your best. This Valentine's Day, there is no need to give yourself a present - unless you want to! But remember to extend the care and respect that you give others to yourself. You will be healthier, happier and better able to care for others if you have taken care of yourself.

Preventive



It's a fact. Heart disease kills more women than all cancers combined. Fact. Heart disease kills more women than men. Fact. Ninety percent of women have at least one risk factor for developing heart disease. Yet, women continue to think of heart disease as a man's disease. Women need to learn their risks for cardiovascular disease, the symptoms that are common to women and what they can do to be heart healthy.

Risk factors for heart disease in women and men include family history, high blood pressure, diabetes, being overweight or obese, smoking, lack of exercise and high cholesterol. Women are also at an increased risk for heart disease as they get older, especially post-menopausal or post-hysterectomy if the ovaries are removed. Estrogen seems to protect the heart, and estrogen drops after menopause or removal of the ovaries. Any prior heart attack or stroke also puts women at an increased risk.

While many men report heart symptoms as being a "crushing pressure" in the chest or pain that radiates down the left arm or up to the jaw, women's symptoms are often different. Women experience fatigue, shortness of breath, back pain, nausea, stomach pain, pain in the shoulders or a "heartburn" feeling in the chest. Other possible symptoms include breaking out in a cold sweat and an overwhelming feeling of anxiety. Any combination of these symptoms - whether traditionally men's or women's symptoms - is a reason to seek immediate medical attention. Even mild chest pain without other symptoms requires a call to your doctor.

There are things that can be done to reduce the risk of heart disease. Smokers should quit smoking. Smoking is one of the leading causes for heart disease, and quitting smoking will reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease and other serious conditions. Losing weight is important as well. Eating well and exercising to lose weight can lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Recent research has shown that eating fruits and vegetables can also reduce your risk of heart disease. For those who

National Wear Red Day *Women and Heart Health*

have type II diabetes, losing weight and exercising can often get the disease under control as well, which is another way to protect the heart. Additionally, the heart doesn't have to "overwork" when a healthy weight is maintained. Stress is also a known factor in heart disease. Reducing stress through exercise and meditation (see article on page 3) can help. See your doctor regularly to monitor any possible risk factors, and if you believe you are having a heart related problem, make sure that your doctor checks you out completely and runs any necessary tests. Pay attention to the changes in your body, and take control of your health by making sure that your doctor checks these out completely.

Women's heart health is a serious issue. A women's health has a direct relationship to the happiness and wellness of her family. Make a healthy choice today that reduces your risk for cardiovascular disease. Put down the cigarettes. Take a walk. Skip the fried food. Women need to do whatever it takes to protect their health for their own longevity and happiness and for the good of their families

The Benefits of Meditation

Meditation is defined as directed concentration or a focused state of relaxation. Meditation may make you think of faraway places and foreign spiritual practices, but meditation is used by many people for spiritual and non-spiritual reasons. Though many religions include meditation, it is not a religious exercise, and it is not about unusual visions or contacting some other dimension. At its foundation, meditation is the practice of focusing on something external (candle, sound, mantra) or internal (breath, mental image, uplifting thought) in order to quiet the mind and allow all of the processes of the body to relax, repair and reboot.

The health benefits of meditation are many. One of the first benefits of meditation is reduced blood pressure. Studies published in 2004 and 2008 in the *American Journal of Hypertension* both found that meditation (in this case, transcendental meditation) reduced blood pressure readings more than other types of stress management and relaxation. This reduction in blood pressure also reduced the risk of subsequent heart disease. Meditation is used by many to promote healing, reduce anxiety, improve mood and increase pain tolerance for those who have chronic pain.

There are many types of meditation. Some require twice a day practice for 20-30 minutes. Others ask for a few minutes a day to focus on your breathing. Breath focus is at the heart of all meditation practices and is a good place to start for someone not familiar or comfortable with meditation. Try this: Sitting comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor, close your eyes and take 1 - 2 minutes and pay attention to your breathing. Don't worry if your mind wanders. Just watch the thoughts pass by (much like clouds that move across the sky) and refocus your attention to your breath. Try this once or twice a day for a week and see if the practice gets easier and you find yourself generally less stressed after doing this.

If you are interested in learning more about meditation or trying one of the many methods of meditation, begin by doing some research online or at your local library. The benefits you receive from regular meditation can improve both your physical and mental health. Find one of the ways to meditate that works for you and make it part of your healthy habits!

HEALTH NEWS



The Flu: What You Can Do Now

- Get the flu shot if you haven't.
 - Wash your hands often.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Get early treatment, especially for children, the elderly or anyone with a chronic condition.
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Healthy Stews

Nutrition

Winter is a time we crave warm, comfort foods. Though many comfort foods are high in fat and cholesterol, a healthy option is stew. Stews are an easy “one pot meal” and can be made with an emphasis on vegetables and lean protein. Here are some tips for making a healthy and delicious stew:

Choose lean cuts of pork, beef or chicken, but don't cook them as long as they may get tough. Adding lean meat later in the cooking process can keep the meat tender and reduce the fat. If you choose traditional stew meat, use half of what you would normally use and double up on the vegetables and/or beans. Browning the meat is not necessary if your sauce has a good color to it.

Vegetables, vegetables, vegetables! Stews are a great choice for loading up on vegetables and introducing your family to new choices. Chunky cuts of vegetables can make your stew heartier and can make up for using less meat. Besides the traditional onions, tomatoes, carrots and potatoes, try adding zucchini, peppers, eggplant, turnips, corn and peas.

Adding beans to your stew adds lean protein and a great source of fiber. Any bean you like is a good choice, but many stews use white beans, pinto beans and garbanzo beans.

Many stews use flour (usually to coat the meat before browning) to thicken the stew. You can skip this step and serve brown rice or polenta as a base for your stew to add richness to the dish.

In these final weeks of winter, enjoy a healthy stew with your family and friends. Use fresh herbs and seasonings for the best flavor, and add a loaf of fresh whole grain bread as a wonderful compliment to a steaming bowl of stew. Stew can taste even better the next day and can be taken in a thermos for lunch or put in the freezer for up to three months. Make the most of the end of winter weather with an easy, healthy comfort food like stew.

Produce of the Month: Fennel

Fennel - related to carrots, dill and parsley - is a vegetable that is versatile in soups, salads or side dishes. A white or pale green bulb with stalks, fennel is slightly sweet, with a mild licorice taste. It is low in calories and high in vitamin C and fiber.

The Basics: Buy fennel that has clean and firm bulbs, avoiding soft spots or bruising. Store fennel in the refrigerator for 3-4 days. The bulb, the stalks and the leaves are all edible. Rinse the fennel in cold water and cut it according to your recipe's needs. The bulb can be eaten raw or cooked. The stalks are a good addition to soups and stews. The leaves are often used as a fresh herb.

Try This: Fennel is a perfect match for oranges. Create a salad with fennel, orange slices, orange zest and pine nuts, topped with a light vinaigrette. Or sauté fennel with onions and garlic and add to your favorite red sauce in your next pasta dish.

The Facts: One cup of fennel has about 30 calories, is high in fiber and high in Vitamin C.

Fitness My Television is My Trainer

Though gym membership traditionally increases in January, February can find many of us wanting to stay out of the cold and work out at home. For those who do stay home, the television is often our “trainer” through the use of exercise DVDs and gaming systems that offer fitness programs (e.g., the Wii, etc.). With more people having access to these at-home workout programs, it’s important to look at the pros and cons of using your television as your personal trainer.

Pros:

- Working out at home can give you more time with your family. For those who are working long days, eliminating the drive to and from the gym and working out with or by your family can offer you some much needed time together.
- Working out at home offers you flexibility. Rather than having to make a certain fitness class at a certain time, you can choose when to work out. Whether it’s early morning or later at night, you are in charge.
- Working out at home offers you privacy. Some people are uncomfortable exercising in front of others and would prefer to work out alone. Eliminating the anxiety you may have about working out in front of others can free you to work out even harder.
- Working out at home can offer you a wide variety of exercises. You can customize your workout on many of the gaming systems or rent/buy a variety of different fitness DVDs. You are not stuck taking a certain exercise class just because it fits the time you can exercise.
- Weather is not an issue when you work out at home.

Cons:

- Working out at home can suffer from many distractions. The phone rings; the laundry is piled up; the kids are arguing.



All of these can distract you from the most important task at hand - improving your health.

- It can be easy to skip your work out when you exercise at home. Without accountability to a class, trainer or even a workout buddy, it can be easy to skip your workout just this once. And again. And again.
- Some people don’t work out as intensely as they need to when working out at home. For some, having a teacher, trainer or classmates to push you a little increases your intensity and results!
- Your exercise form can suffer when working out at home. Having the proper form when lifting a weight or doing aerobics is important both for the results you wish to achieve as well as to prevent injury. Having a teacher or trainer can help you maintain the proper form while exercising.

So what to do? If you work out at home, pay special attention to your exercise form to prevent injury. Make exercise a priority and commitment. Use a heart rate monitor to help you stay in your training zone. If you find it too hard to keep your commitment to better fitness by exercising at home, get to the gym regularly, letting your family know that you are giving them the best gift possible - a healthier you! No matter what you choose, make 2013 the year that exercise becomes a habit you will keep the rest of your life.

Ask the Trainer: Is it true that if you burn more calories than you consume, you will always lose weight?



Everyone is different and everyone burns calories differently. For some of my clients, calories in/calories out really does work. If they burn more calories than they consume they lose weight. It's pretty simple. Unfortunately, not all of my clients are this way. Equally important to the amount of calories is the kind of calories eaten. If you eat 1200 calories of junk food, you may not lose the weight that someone who ate 1200 quality calories would lose. In other words, it can also depend on overall nutrition. I teach my clients the 80/20 Rule. 80% of what you eat should come from fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans and seeds. The other 20% should come from everything else, including meat, dairy, etc. This rule has led many of my clients to their weight loss goals, and they follow this rule long after they lose weight. Eating this way isn't just about losing weight. It's about living a healthy life. It's a lifestyle change.

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WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Contact Working Well for more information on wellness programs and how they can help reduce healthcare costs and create a healthier workforce.

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