



Live Well, Work Well

August 2023

Did you know that August is National Wellness Month?

This month focuses on self-care, stress management, and creating healthy routines. Self-care is an important part of well-being for us as well as those around us. It can take 21 days for something to become a habit and 90 days for it to be a lifestyle change.

Practicing self-care, managing stress, being mindful, practicing self-compassion, and focusing on proper nutrition and exercise are all things you could work towards incorporating into your daily routine. Here are some simple self-care habits to start including in your daily routine to help improve your well-being.

- **Drink more water.** Staying hydrated is one of the best things you can do for your overall health. Water helps give you energy, flushes toxins from your body, improves concentration, and can even help with weight loss.
- **Stretch or practice yoga.** If you are on your feet all day, or sitting at a desk most of the day, stretching daily can help improve your posture, heal back pain, as well as ease your mind.

- **Try something new.** Whether it be a new bike route, exploring a new restaurant, or volunteering. Doing something new can help improve your mental outlook and make you feel good overall.
- **Prioritize exercise.** There are so many benefits to exercising including pain management, letting stress out, boosting confidence, as well as increasing strength, and so much more.
- **Pay attention.** If something is making you feel overwhelmed or stressed, pay attention and act. Go take a walk, try a breathing technique, talk to a friend, find something to help alleviate the overwhelming feeling, and give yourself the opportunity to slow down.
- **Make healthy food choices.** Food can impact the way you feel. Having a balanced diet and good nutrition will help nourish your body and lead to good overall health.

Take this month dedicated to wellness as your chance to begin creating and incorporating healthy routines into your daily life. Adding one or two of these habits daily or weekly can lead to big changes over time. *(From The Kim Foundation)*



Mark your calendar!



Tai Chi

Aug. 11 @ 1 p.m. (Asheboro)
Aug. 25 @ 1 p.m. (High Point)



Benefits Open Enrollment

open enrollment for the '23-'24 plan year begins Aug. 16

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

The Wellness Committee values your opinions and ideas.

To contact us, send an email to:

wellness@hospiceofthepiedmont.org



Why Taking Time Off is Good for Your Health

Research shows that taking time off benefits team members in three ways:

1) Mind. Taking a vacation provides greater opportunity for rest and better sleep (both quantity and quality), which can help unclutter your mind to boost creativity.

2) Body. Relaxing on vacation can reduce the levels of your stress hormones and allow your immune system to recover, making you less prone to get sick.

3) Soul. While it sounds hokey, answers to life's big questions — like “What do I really want?” or “What's most important to me?” — are more likely to come to us when there is some space and stillness.



MIND

The cognitive impact when you're overwhelmed with work can include cognitive fatigue, difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and impaired problem-solving ability, among several other effects. Taking a vacation provides greater opportunity for rest and better sleep (both quantity and quality), which can help unclutter your mind to create more mental space.

Uncluttering your mind allows you to think more clearly and boosts creativity. This can happen in both small and big ways while on vacation. Research shows that merely taking a walk (even if it's inside on a treadmill) significantly increases creativity. On a grander scale, taking time off provides an opportunity for big or innovative ideas to emerge. Lin-Manuel Miranda conceived of *Hamilton* while on vacation. “It's no accident that the best idea I've ever had in my life — perhaps maybe the best one I'll ever have in my life — came to me on vacation,” he shared. “The moment my brain got a moment's rest, *Hamilton* walked into it.”

Taking vacation — and even just planning for it — can also improve your mood. In particular, many people carry a significant “sleep debt” that often comes with work-related stress and anxiety. Research shows that this lack of sleep can result in negative moods such as sadness, anger, frustration, and irritability, which can, in turn, result in more difficulty sleeping. Longer term, lack of sleep can also increase risk of dementia. Vacation provides the opportunity to reduce or eliminate this sleep deficit. According to the American Psychological Association, getting even 60 to 90 minutes more of sleep a night can improve both memory and concentration. Vacation also allows you to reset sleep patterns that can improve your mood and cognition beyond vacation. The University of Pittsburgh's Mind-Body Center found that taking vacation increases positive emotions and reduces depression. And spending time in nature has been shown to reduce negative rumination and improves overall psychological wellbeing.

BODY

Everyday work pressures can result in elevated levels of the stress hormones cortisol and epinephrine, similar to if you felt you were in physical danger. An increase in stress hormones has the effect of suppressing your immune system so your body can channel its energy to flee from (or fight) a non-existent saber-toothed tiger. Relaxing on vacation can reduce the levels of these stress hormones and allow your immune system to recover, making you less prone to get sick. Conversely, if stress hormones stay chronically elevated due to lack of rest and recovery time that comes as a result of putting off or forgoing vacation, you will be more susceptible to not only colds or the flu, but also vulnerable longer term to more serious illnesses like heart disease or cancer.

And depending on how you spend your time while on vacation, there are additional potential physical benefits. Being in nature has the effect of reducing your heart rate and blood pressure. Engaging in physical activities like hiking, biking, swimming, or other water-based exercise can improve heart and respiratory health, while building stronger bones and muscles and improving balance, which is more important as you age. Getting a massage is not only a great way to relax while on vacation, but has physical benefits such as improving circulation, flexibility, immune response, and decreasing muscle stiffness and joint inflammation.

SOUL

While the mental and physical benefits of vacation have been frequently touted, what is less commonly discussed is how vacation can impact us more profoundly on a deeper, more spiritual level. Our soul is our spiritual essence — it's who we really are at our core — before our families, friends, jobs, and society inundated us with messages about who we should be.

When you take time away from work to go on vacation, assuming you can mostly unplug, this break can allow you to tune out much of this external noise and tune back into your true self. You can start to separate the striver part of you, let go of your ego, and reacquaint yourself with the essence of who you really are. When people talk about their “happy place,” it's usually a place that allows them to let go of daily pressures, reconnect with themselves at a soul level, and feel a sense of peace. It's here that you are able to express your values unencumbered — whether it's adventure, learning, or beauty — and do things that bring you joy.

While it sounds hokey, answers to life's big questions — like “What do I really want?” or “What's most important to me?” — are more likely to come to us when there is some space and stillness. We get better at listening to our inner voice and can hone our intuition. Note that this quiet space can feel extremely uncomfortable for anxious over-achievers, who typically have a hard time being still and not “doing.” Yet, it's precisely this space we have while on vacation that offers an opportunity to tap into your authentic self. *(Excerpt from the Harvard Business Review.)*

Our organization recognizes your work is taxing in many ways, not just physically, and our hope for you is that our generous PTO program allows you to take care of yourself and celebrate life in the ways that are important for you.

Our program is designed to provide the ability to customize your time off in the way that best suits your needs. Whether that means time to celebrate birthdays, holidays, cultural or religious celebrations, vacations or mental health days is completely up to you! More information regarding the details of the PTO program's purpose is provided in the Team Member Handbook.