



# Life Balance

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

January 2015

## The key to well-being: Treat yourself the way you'd like to be treated

How do you define success? For many people it means achieving wealth, respect, and even fame, as a result of doing something extraordinarily well or different. But leading a successful life may have less to do with wealth and fame than with balance, and a couple of words that begin with "w."

The first — wellness — encompasses everything we do to prevent or reduce the extent of an illness, promote recovery and increase the second "w" — well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Wellness requires that our bodies, our minds, and our emotional and spiritual selves maintain a healthy balance.<sup>2</sup> In other words, to live successfully it is not enough to be free from disease; you want to be a strong, resilient

and a productive member of society. You want to reach your full potential. You want to be happy.<sup>3</sup>

Being happy may mean different things to different people but there's one basic rule that can, if followed, lead everyone to attain a greater sense of well-being, and ultimately, happiness. That basic rule is: treat yourself the way you'd like to be treated.

### Follow your own instruction manual

Let's pretend for a moment that you are a car — a nice expensive sedan or high-performing roadster. Your owner pumps you full of low-octane gas, runs you endlessly without ever stopping for maintenance, or leaves you in the driveway for months and then kicks you in the tires when you don't rev up and speed down the street at 90 miles per hour on the first try. His neglect would no doubt affect the quality of your life as a car.

But what about the quality of your life as a human? Are you following the basic human instruction manual you came

with? Yes, there is such a thing. And it's pretty easy to follow. It calls for being good to yourself by providing your body, mind and spirit with daily essentials like good food, activity, rest and recreation. Here's how it works.

### Eat well

Healthy foods boost your energy, provide your brain with the right fuel to learn and solve problems, and lower the risk of disease.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to popular belief, they can also taste good. Eating well doesn't have to be restrictive. Start by making these small changes<sup>5</sup> and just watch what happens to your body and your state of mind:

- Add a nutritious and low-fat breakfast to your morning.
- Replace processed foods with salads; fried foods with baked, broiled or sautéed foods; cakes and sweets with fruit or yogurt.
- Drink more water, and fewer coffee and caffeinated drinks.

### Move well

Do you remember how great it felt when, as a kid, you swung from the monkey bars or raced

## Laugh well

Did you know that laughing decreases pain, promotes muscle relaxation and reduces anxiety? Studies have found that humor increases lung capacity, strengthens abdominal muscles and increases immunoglobulin A, one of the major antibodies produced by the immune system.<sup>12</sup>

So start laughing and stop suffering! Grab some comics, or tune in to your favorite comedy channel or movie, and let the funny tears flow. Better yet, look for something silly or amusing in your everyday challenges and make it a point to giggle at yourself.

# SEAP

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[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)  
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across an empty field? It wasn't just because you were young and carefree, but because your body was doing what it was built to do — move! Think about it, why else would we come equipped with joints and muscles that allow us to twist, throw, swing, run, dance, jump and crawl?

Regular activity, like healthy eating, decreases stress, increases your energy level and improves your mood.<sup>6</sup> As a bonus, it also reduces your waistline. And what about those happy chemicals like endorphins and serotonin you release when you move? Well, their job is to make you giddy with joy and satisfaction.<sup>7</sup>

To be successful, choose an activity you enjoy or think you'll enjoy. Maybe it's playing beach volleyball or jogging alone through the countryside. Maybe it's kickboxing, yoga, swimming or weightlifting. If you can't think of anything you'd like to do, just start walking. It's practically free — except for a pair of sneakers — and doesn't require much effort. And it's something you can do alone or with friends. Start slow and gradually increase your distance and speed. After a while, you may find it hard to stop, and even be ready to take up a more rigorous activity. If you haven't exercised in a while, check with your doctor before starting a new routine.

### Rest and relax well

Although at times it may seem like a waste of valuable hours, sleeping is actually a very important pastime. 7 to 9 hours of good sleep every night supplies you with the physical and mental tools you need to cope with everyday life.<sup>8</sup> Sleeplessness affects learning and the creation of memories, causes skin fatigue, kills your sex drive, and can lead to depression, even suicide. It has also been shown to make you gain weight.<sup>9</sup>

But “how can I sleep when I can't relax?,” you're probably asking. Good question. It's very difficult to go from full throttle to idle, and then just turn off the ignition and hug your pillow. To sleep well, it's important that you take time to unwind by doing something you enjoy like listening to music, reading or meditating. This mental break serves to distract you from your daily stressors and sets you up for a good night's rest.<sup>10</sup>

### Play well

When was the last time you wrestled with your pooch, painted with your hands, or danced in the rain? When was the last time you had fun? Believe it or not, having fun is good for you! Fun helps you detach from your problems, feel better about yourself and lift your spirits.<sup>11</sup> Which is why it's important to make time to meet with friends or chat with them online, play a game of cards or golf, or do whatever it is that makes you come alive.

### Be well

There's much in life you can't control, but you can control your approach to life. Being good to yourself first will guide you to achieve a balance between your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves, and help you tackle any challenges that come your way successfully.



## Resources

[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)

Search under the words “wellness” or “well-being” for access to links, articles, videos and more.

1 <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/may>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 MHM\_2013\_Pathways\_to\_Wellness\_Toolkit\_-\_Fact\_Sheets.pdf

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 [http://med.stanford.edu/news\\_releases/2004/December/mignot.htm](http://med.stanford.edu/news_releases/2004/December/mignot.htm)

10 MHM\_2013\_Pathways\_to\_Wellness\_Toolkit\_-\_Fact\_Sheets.pdf

11 Ibid.

12 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2989702/>