

Cardiovascular Wellness Program Newsletter

Issue #6

April 2021

Comments from Linda

Of course I know the question of the hour is: "When do we get to go back to Folsom Hall?" Most of us have been vaccinated, the world is returning to some semblance of order, and we are tired of staying away. Sadly, the answer is still a resounding "I don't know". We must behold to the powers that be, the CSUS administrators, and so far the discussion is that some allowed classes will return live at 20-50% capacity for the fall semester. Where that leaves us is a complete unknown. I will of course let everyone know when I know more.

In the meantime, we continue to offer a virtual, Zoom meeting program. We have had some excellent sessions this semester. I know it's not everyone's cup of tea, but it good to see so many of you have mastered it. Your efforts and participation are greatly appreciated. I will share in this newsletter some of the great interactions we have had.

Thinking of you always.

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Dig in:

I say dig in. There can be nothing more refreshing than to plant a little seed/ seedling or plant onto the soil and water it, tend to it, talk to it and watch it grow (and in my case, sometimes, not grow). I think the act of gardening teaches us to value life other than our own, patience to watch little leaves unfurl, and marvel at the creation's gift to mankind. I love spring, and planting a few flower and fruit trees every year, brings me joy.

Gardening is one of the easiest and most common way of interacting with nature in many countries. A metanalysis of 22 studies from around the world showed that there is a significant reduction in depression, anxiety, and BMI, with increase in life satisfaction, quality of life and sense of community in gardeners vs non-gardeners. There is a even a " Nature deprivation disorder" seen in children with depression and anxiety. In adults, it is one of the recommended treatments for "lifestyle diseases" such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Talking about various gardening tricks, exchanging stories about roses, and putting our heads together to fight off plant pests, help us keep up with a healthy conversation.

So go ahead, plant a little urban vegetable garden in a pot or your backyard, and see what fun it is, to play in the mud.



Radhika Nandur Bukkapatnam, MD
Medical Director, CWP

Loneliness Is a Public Health Problem: Loneliness is not just a feeling; it is also a public health problem that has been linked to increased risk of mental health issues, heart disease and even death. With rates of loneliness on the rise in the USA and around the world, people are addressing this crisis using everything from companion robots to social networking sites and apps. A new study in JAMA Psychiatry suggests that a better solution may lie in a much older, more ubiquitous form of technology: phone calls! *Apple News, March 26, 2021*



PreventionForward

Javier López, MD
Medical Director, UC Davis
Cardiac Rehabilitation Program

This news clip intrigued me. So, I downloaded the source and thought it would be great to share some of this information with you. The Journal reported that the importance of social determinants of health has been gaining traction in the health care sector during the last decade. Social determinants of health have been found to be responsible for >50% of health outcomes, and an abundance of research has demonstrated that no matter the advancements in medicine and health care, the health of individuals and communities will not improve if these root-cause social factors are not addressed. The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting one of these factors: social isolation or loneliness.

Social isolation, defined as an “objective deficit in the number of relationships with and frequency of contact with family, friends, and the community,” is associated with increased rates of loneliness and suicide, hypertension, and other physical health effects that may be mediated by neurohormonal-immunological pathways. Demonstrated to be as dangerous to health as smoking 15 cigarettes per day, social isolation has been identified as worthy of being a public health priority.

The key question in the JAMA Psychiatry study was: Can a program of empathetic conversations delivered by laypeople via telephone reduce loneliness, depression, and anxiety in at-risk older adults? They studied 240 older adults receiving services through a Meals on Wheels organization. A 4-week empathy-oriented telephone program was delivered by rapidly trained lay callers during the coronavirus pandemic. Loneliness, depression, and anxiety were rapidly reduced through these calls that focused on empathetic listening. This suggests an easily implemented approach can address a persistent health challenge of older adults.

I am very proud of being part of the CWP program. The sense of community, sharing of experiences and learning that occur in this program, much like empathetic phone calls, are likely among the best remedies against social isolation and loneliness out there. Kudos to you for engaging and participating! Make no mistake, I believe that just “being here” is already helping all of our cardiovascular health and wellness. Keep up the great work!

Reference: Effect of Layperson-Delivered, Empathy-Focused Program of Telephone Calls on Loneliness, Depression, and Anxiety Among Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Randomized Clinical Trial Kahlon, M., et. al., JAMA Psychiatry. Published online February 23, 2021. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2021.0113

Reasons to Start Laughing Now

When you laugh, you reap the benefits of a full body workout, both inside and out. Laughter yoga is based on the principles that laughing is so good for the body, it's worth including in your workout. When laughing, you:

- Improve cardiovascular function: Laughing in itself is a workout, whether you laugh in the gym or at your work desk.
- Reduce stress: When you're laughing, you're not thinking about a stressful situation you may be dealing with.
- Enhance your immune system: Laughing activates t-cells, which fight sickness.
- Tone muscles: When you're crunched over in a belly laugh, your abdomen muscles are working hard.
- Lowers blood pressure: Laughing risk of stroke and heart attack.
- Higher pain tolerance: Chuckling releases endorphins, natural pain killers for your body.



Warm Up With Laughter

Laughter isn't necessarily an adequate fitness routine on its own but using it strategically can enhance your current workouts. Try to laugh while you warm up. If you reduce stress, you'll have a more effective workout. And, with improved circulation and cardiovascular function, your body will be able to work more efficiently, as well.

So, how do you get laughing pre-gym?

- Watch a stand-up comedy or a funny movie during a treadmill warm-up.
- Listen to comedians on your iPod on your way to the gym.

Push Harder With Laughter

While you don't need to listen to comedy during every workout, your tough routines have much to gain. An Oxford University study found a correlation between a higher pain threshold and comedy. When your endorphins are kicking, your mind and body are less susceptible to pain. Set up a laughing playlist and turn it on during an especially hard workout.

Add More Laughing to Your Day

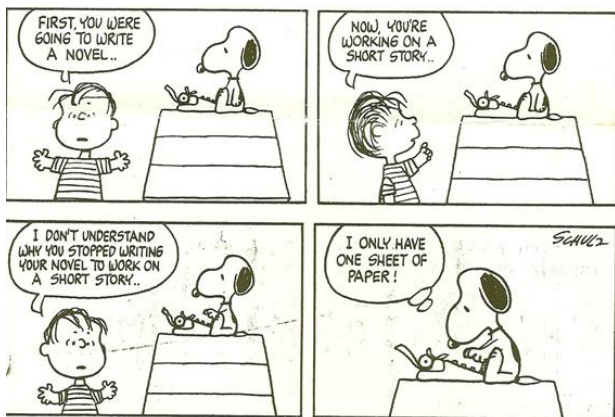
Laughing more throughout the day can improve your overall well-being which affects everything from stress levels to the energy needed for a post-work gym session. Here are five ways you can start laughing today.

1. Read the funnies in the morning.
2. Watch a humorous video when working on a stressful project at work.
3. Listen to a comedy album on your way home work, or when stuck in traffic.
4. Grab dinner with old friends, and laugh about old times.
5. See the humor in an otherwise annoying situation
6. Don't be afraid to laugh at that bad joke; your body will thank you.

Exercise Reminders *from Linda*

The encouragement is always out there that you do regular cardiovascular training activities and strive to get at least 30 minutes in most days of the week. It might be enough if you are doing Zoom workouts with me 4 days a week. If I'm not seeing you, are you getting some activity in? Days are getting longer and warmer, so hopefully you are finding some time to get outdoors a bit and get some vitamin D as well as a little physical activity

.. And if you work a few laughs in during that outing, so much the better.



CWP Newsletter

This newsletter is created bimonthly with a primary intent of reaching those we are not seen often at Zoom sessions. I send several out in the regular mail—if you would like to receive a hard copy in the mail and are not currently doing so, please let me know. Best way to make that request is to send an email: csuscwvwellness@gmail.com.

Prior issues are archived on our webpage:

<https://cardiovascularwellnessprogram.org/newsletter>

Self-Discovery Challenge

This semester I put several challenges out there. In February it was diet and exercise. In March it was mindfulness practice and mental exercise. In April, the challenge is about self-discovery and connections. There is an encouragement for you to all do some writing—Sharon gave a wonderful presentation at the end of March about sharing your story. You can see the recording of that talk from the educational page on our website:

<https://cardiovascularwellnessprogram.org/educational-programs>

You are encouraged to write these stories and then make a decision whether or not to share them. If you are willing to share, we of course would love to see what you have written, and one of our gerontology students will be compiling them into a collection. Sharing them of course is your choice and you will benefit from the experience even if no one else ever sees what you have written.



Celebrate spring with fresh produce!

By Debbie Lucus

I love the change in seasons and have to say that spring and fall are my favorites. In spring I enjoy the longer days, the warmer weather, the flowering trees (I am blessed to not suffer from allergies), planting a new garden and the ability to BBQ at night without freezing. In spring we have some great produce coming into season as well as many carry-overs from fall. Even though we are fortunate to have most produce available to us year-round, buying in season and locally-grown, ensures the produce is at the peak of ripeness, lowers our carbon footprint and supports our local farmers.



I went to the Farmers' Market this morning for the first time in a year (!) and talked to the farmers about what they are harvesting now. Here are a few of the items they told me to get (plus some tips I borrowed from Dr. Google):

Artichokes: While these harvest in fall, too, spring brings a new crop of the larger thistles. Look for artichokes with tight, compact leaves and fresh-cut stem ends. What are you going to dip your artichoke leaves in? Try hummus or cashew cream or tahini dressing.

Beets: A wide variety of colorful beets were at the market today. Red, golden, Chioggia (red on the outside, rings of pink and white on the inside) and even white. If you can, get the beets with the greens on and you've got two veggies in one – plus beet greens are one of the highest antioxidant veggies there are! I roast my beets, but you can also microwave them by wrapping a beet in parchment paper, or just cook in the oven by wrapping in foil.

Chard: There are numerous colors of chard, too: rainbow, yellow, red, white. My garden is booming with it now but when the weather gets too hot, it starts to turn bitter. Chard is a great source of folate, vitamin A & C and calcium (but not as readily available). You can dice it up and sauté or microwave it or even eat it raw. The stems can be eaten, too (I usually sauté stems first, take them out of the pan and then throw the leaves in the same pan). Add a little of your favorite balsamic vinegar and you are good to go.

Grapefruit: Colorful varieties of this citrus were at the market in whites, pinks and reds as well as our other favorite citrus (lemons, blood oranges and cara cara oranges are sometimes still available). You'll see lots of citrus recipes in the spring magazines that utilize grapefruit if you don't want to just eat it raw. I also like to broil mine. The redder it is on the outside, the sweeter it is.

Kale: readily available at the market in green, curly, red Russian, flat leaf. This cruciferous green is a strong cancer-fighter! I cook it the same way as I do chard, but it might take a few more minutes and the stems I save to throw into a soup.

Pea and Sunflower shoots: These are available year-round in our area as they are grown indoors. They cut off the small sprouts as they grow and they are sold as 'shoots' or microgreens. They are harvested about 2 weeks after planting and contain more concentrated nutrients than their adult versions. These are great in salads, sandwiches and toppings on soups or stews.

Sugar snap peas: These are full grown peas and are beautiful this time of year. Eat them raw (shell + pea) or steam them to make them a bit softer to chew. These make a great snack dipped in hummus.

Radishes: The farmer I spoke with today was very proud of her varieties of radishes. Red, daikon, Chioggia and watermelon to name a few. While typically eaten raw on salads, you can cook or Throat radishes, too.

Spring onions and garlic: These are basically the early growth of onions and garlic – picked while they are small when farmers thin the rows. If left to grow, they would enlarge to the normal bulbs we are used to. Use these in the same way you would use the larger variety, cooked or raw. They are generally milder than the adult version.

Strawberries: I saw strawberries from Watsonville this morning, but hopefully we will have them at our stands soon. We usually have them by Easter, but that is unlikely to happen this year. What to do with strawberries?? Eat them raw, slice them and top your cereal or ‘nice cream’. I heard a great topping today that would be great with strawberries: chocolate balsamic!

Zebra: These aren’t ready yet, but I wanted a ‘Z’ to round out my list. Looking forward to Zebra zucchini and tomatoes this summer!!



Tangy Green Zebra Gazpacho

Here’s a recipe to try when you get those green Zebras, heirloom tomatoes with a striped pattern. They are sweet like red tomatoes but give this gazpacho a lovely jade hue. To make the chilled soup extra tangy, use tomatillos or unripe red tomatoes instead of Green Zebras.

Ingredients

- 2 lbs Green Zebra tomatoes, coarsely chopped, plus 1 Green Zebra tomato cut into wedges for garnish
- 1 seedless cucumber, unpeeled and coarsely chopped, plus finely diced unpeeled cucumber for garnish
- 1 medium sweet onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 Hass avocado—halved, pitted and peeled
- 1 small jalapeño, stemmed and seeded
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice
- 2 tablespoons mint leaves, plus more for garnish
- 2 tablespoons cilantro leaves
- Salt and freshly ground pepper



Directions

In a blender, combine half each of the coarsely chopped tomatoes, cucumber and onion with the avocado, jalapeño, garlic, lime juice and 1 cup of cold water. Purée until smooth. Transfer the purée to a large bowl.

Add the remaining coarsely chopped tomatoes, cucumber and onion to the blender along with the mint and cilantro and pulse to a chunky purée (add a little water if needed). Add the purée to the bowl and stir well. Refrigerate the soup until well chilled, ~ 1 hour. Season with salt and pepper and ladle it into chilled bowls. Garnish the cold soup with the tomato wedges, diced cucumber, mint leaves and serve. A drizzle of olive oil is an option. The gazpacho can be stored in an airtight container and refrigerated overnight.

Practicing Mindfulness

By Linda M, Larsen, RN-BC, RYT

Spring is here again! I invite you to step outside and enjoy this time full of warmth returning with a mindfulness practice that can increase happiness and possibly bring joy. How about setting an

intention this week to not just go for a walk but go for a *Sense and Savoring Walk*? In a study by Fred Bryant of Loyola University Chicago, who has spent the last 25 years researching the psychology of joy, participants who took Savoring Walks daily for a week reported greater increases in happiness than participants who went for walks as usual. “Making a conscious effort to notice and explicitly acknowledge the various sources of joy around us can make us happier,” writes Bryant and Joseph Veroff in the book *Savoring: A New Model of Positive Experience*.



So what’s a Sense and Savoring Walk? – Instead of just going along mindless to your surroundings with your Bluetooth or iPod buds blasting in your ear, the goal is to notice as many positive things around you as you can. Using all your senses, witness sights, sounds and smells as you walk. You might find yourself enjoying that a neighbor has a tree you never really noticed, or the structural design of a house, the dance of a cloud, the colors and smell of grass or budding flowers, or the way the breeze caresses you.

As you notice something, acknowledge it in your mind—don’t just let it slip past you. Pause for a moment as you hear or see each thing and make sure it registers, really consciously savoring, rather than letting it pass by or taking it for granted. Try to identify what it is about that thing that makes it pleasurable to you. Bryant and Veroff (2007) define savoring as attending, appreciating, and enhancing positive experiences that occur in one’s life. If your “Why” for adding mindfulness practices is to increase happiness and boost feelings of appreciation and gratitude, the Universe in a Rose Petal encourages you to take the time to “stop and smell the roses”— or what researchers call “savoring.”

Even in the mud and scum of things, something always, always sings.

p
Ralph Waldo Emerson

For more in depth on a Sense and Savor walk or Savoring you can read:

https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/savoring_walk

http://phd.meghan-smith.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/007-bryant_veroff_concepts-of-savoring.pdf

Program Interactions

We are doing our best to deliver as much as we can our program offerings in on on-line format (Zoom meetings). As always, there are lots of choices—exercise sessions, including chair exercise, mindfulness practice (thank you Linda Larsen!), nutrition education (thank you Debbie & Margie!), and medical education (thank you Drs. Bukkapatnam and Lopez!). Our once a month Zoom Socials are fun, and a really great way to get to see one another. No, it's not the same as a group potluck, but we are making the best of it. Our student interns continue to do great things too and an especial thanks goes to our assistant, Tim, for coordinating both cooking demonstrations with the interns and quiz games at Zoom Socials. I wanted to make sure you know who all our current students are:

We have four gerontology interns: Jackie N, Leanne, and Tamia are in their 2nd semester and Maria is in her 1st semester. You will be seeing presentations from the 2nd semester interns soon and Maria is offering to help coordinate our writing project and she shares this encouragement; *“As an intern this semester and next I’m hoping get together a project where participants of the Cardiovascular wellness program who want to participate are able to share storytelling about their lives, where we can connect with one another more.”*

We have two community nutrition interns, Anne & Kristine—you have seen both of them at cooking demonstrations, and they will be doing more of that in April. Anne sent in this comment: *“Hi, I'm Anne. I'm double majoring in Dietetics and Psychology. I'm also a peer health educator and do nutrition counseling for Sac State students. I'd love to have the opportunity to do some one-on-one diet analyses with anyone who is interested in the next couple of months. Let me know if you have any questions!”*

We have four general interns (ID201), Cody, Bayann, Jackie G, and Ryan. You have seen them at Zoom meetings and also at cooking demos. They will all be compiling the Fine Arts survey we completed last month (yes, too long, flow issues,, but hopefully a good initial stab) and sharing those results in a presentation in early May.

And different this semester we also have two community psychology interns—Citlaly and Victoria. They are plugged into our stress management features and if you hang out with Dave or Linda Larsen, you have seen them there.

I know the experiences these students are getting would be so much better if we were live, but, again, we are doing the best we can in our virtual world and I am proud of the contributions they are all making.

Other interactions this semester that serve to establish our viability: nursing 171 and gerontology 101 students. Many of you have had one-on-one interactions with the nursing students and we have had three so far with six more sessions in April that serve as service learning for the gero students. We provide them a platform for them to interact and ask questions. Thanks so much to all of you who have stepped up and join these sessions—it truly is a great help.