My Doctor Said “Get Out!”

Research has long shown that sunlight can ease depression, especially seasonal affective disorder (SAD). New studies are expanding those findings to show that any activity outdoors, whether walking in a park or gardening in the backyard, improves mood, self-esteem and motivation.

Many health care researchers and practitioners say that ecotherapy*, or nature-based healing, can have regenerative powers, improving mood and easing anxiety, stress and depression.

But that’s not all. According to WebMD, health care providers are also giving their patients “nature prescriptions” to help treat a variety of medical conditions, from post-cancer fatigue to obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

The point is: Get outside—it’s good for you!

* Ecotherapy is a term coined by pastoral counselor Howard Clinebell in his book Ecotherapy, 1996.

Sources: The University of Essex and WebMD

Well-Being the Wesley Way

Through his sermons and writings, John Wesley advocated for a holistic approach toward spiritual and physical health, emphasizing vigorous exercise, fresh air and a healthy diet.

Wespath does not take this direction lightly. The Center for Health’s well-being efforts apply Wesley’s words into action. New projects focus on ‘Well-Being the Wesley Way’ with Deskercise videos, stretch breaks at meetings and educational events, and toolkits to help you combat diabetes, quit tobacco, lose weight and more! See the Resources section (page 4) for links to these helpful tools.

Wesley said...

“It will be a double blessing if you give yourself up to the Great Physician, that He may heal soul and body together.”

The Center for Health focuses on improving five dimensions of well-being—physical, emotional, spiritual, social and financial—for clergy and laity of The United Methodist Church (UMC) and their families. Among the Center for Health’s offerings are well-being programs, an interactive website, trends and research, educational opportunities, and connections to the UMC Health Ministry Network (UMCHMN) and related resources.
PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY

Gaining Tools to Handle Stress

I was dealing with some stress due to transitions at work and decided to reach out to talk to someone from the Live and Work Well (Employee Assistance Program [EAP]) program, since it was included in our HealthFlex plan coverage. The EAP person I spoke to (Richard) was amazing and gave me great resources to deal with the stress I was facing—giving me tools I had never thought of before. At the end of the call he also went over all the other benefits that we have through Live and Work Well that I didn’t even know about.

Michelle B.
Clergy, Susquehanna Annual Conference

Even Jesus Needed Time Away

A number of years ago, while serving as pastor of a local congregation, I came across a simple prayer in a preaching journal. This prayer struck me with its simplicity, truth and invitation to me as a leader in the Church: “Dear God, the Church is yours. I’m going to bed.”

Whether you serve the Church as a pastor, lay staff, faithful member, volunteer, administrative leader or in some other capacity, you can benefit from such a reminder. The Church belongs to God, and was brought into being and is sustained through God’s Holy Spirit. Although we play a critical role in the Church as disciples of Jesus Christ, there is grace, humility and peaceful rest in trusting the Church to God’s keeping while we sleep, rest or even take a vacation.

I found this prayer to be quite helpful to my spiritual well-being as a leader in the Church. I even printed it, framed it and put it at my bedside! In my current work with the Center for Health, I offer a printed copy of this prayer to participants when I do a self-care workshop for clergy or other Church leaders.

I share this prayer with you in hopes that it may strengthen your own spiritual well-being. After a day of giving yourself in service to the Church, go to sleep in peace, trusting the Church and the results of your work to God’s care. Be sure to take a regular day off, observe a Sabbath and take your vacation time to be renewed. The Church can go on without you for a while. Even Jesus needed time away!

“Dear God, the Church is yours. I’m going to bed.”
I Came That You May Have Life, and Have It Abundantly—John 10:10

The word “Life” is translated from the Greek word “Zoe,” which means possessing vitality, fullness of life, being active and vigorous, and belonging to and devoted to God.

Abundant life is what God intends for each of us. God created us to have vigorous bodies, minds and spirits. To live into this, we should strive for balance in each aspect of our lives.

For those who are called to care for others, “self-care” is vital for the prevention of burnout and compassion fatigue. Self-care can be defined as “a deliberate expenditure of energy and time to perform those activities required for well-being and good health.”

Reflections
• What physical, mental and spiritual symptoms do you experience when an area of your life is unbalanced?
• What type of role model are you in regard to self-care for the faith community you serve?


Easy Healthy Recipe
BLUEBERRY BARBECUED CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS
½ cup diced onion
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cups blueberries
¼ cup ketchup
¼ cup balsamic vinegar
¼ cup dark brown sugar
½ teaspoon salt
6 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts

DIRECTIONS
1. Prepare and heat grill.
2. On a stove, heat a medium saucepan to medium-high heat. Add olive oil and sauté onion for 2 minutes, or until translucent. Add blueberries, ketchup, balsamic vinegar, brown sugar and salt. Stir well. Bring to a simmer and cook, for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. If desired, use an immersion blender (or transfer to a blender) to blend until smooth. Transfer ½ cup of sauce to one bowl and reserve for serving. Transfer remaining sauce to a second bowl for grilling.
4. Pound chicken breasts to flatten to ½-inch thickness. Place flattened chicken breasts on prepared grill. Cook for 5 minutes on one side, turn and grill another 5 minutes.
5. Spread blueberry barbecue sauce evenly over chicken; grill 1 minute.
6. Turn chicken and spoon larger portion of sauce evenly over other side; grill 1 minute longer. Chicken is cooked when internal temperature reaches 165°F.
7. Serve with reserved ½ cup blueberry barbecue sauce.

Nutrition Information
Serving size: 1 chicken breast; serves 6
Calories: 292
Carbohydrates: 22 g
Total Fat: 6 g
Saturated fat: 1 g
Cholesterol: 94 mg
Sodium: 385 mg
Phosphorus: 267 mg

Adapted from: eatright.org

AS A NURSE
Jo Sanders, BSN, RN
Faith Community Nurse, Illinois Great Rivers Conference Member

WELL-BEING TIPS FOR LEADERS
Why Take Vacation Days
Take vacation days: It’s good for you and those around you.

Vacation time can:

Boost Your Energy Level
Mental fatigue is as real as physical fatigue. Just as you need a break after exercising, your brain needs regular breaks. Vacation time can be a good return on investment.

Buffer Burnout
The body needs time off to rejuvenate. People today work longer hours and take fewer days off. Vacation time can provide a renewed, positive outlook toward work.

Help You with Relationships
A Project Time Off study found that 74% of employees who were encouraged to take time off were “extremely” or “very” happy in relationships with family and friends after returning.

Be good to yourself...take your vacation days!

Adapted from: washingtonpost.com; businessinsider.com
Ever wonder why some people are just happy? Is it because they are geared that way? Is it simply that some people are introverts and others are extraverts?

While some people may naturally be more optimistic, being happy is a skill that you can develop. And it has benefits. Actively working on happiness keeps you resilient when tough times transpire. It also helps you see solutions and opportunities that you might not if you were not looking at things in such a positive manner.

To cultivate your happiness:

1. **Practice being positive.** It takes time and dedication to look at things from a different perspective. Instead of looking at something that has gone wrong, look at it as an opportunity to grow, learn and develop. For every negative thought, work on coming up with one or two positive ones.

2. **Focus on the good things.** We often gloss over the simple pleasures in life—a great meal, time with friends and family, a smile from a child. When experiences like these happen, remember how they feel and try to keep them close in your memory.

3. **Positive intent.** Instead of thinking the worst of people, consider that everyone is doing the best they can. Maybe a person who didn’t reply to your cheery hello didn’t hear you, or was deep in thought or worried about a friend. Instead of feeling snubbed, consider asking if everything is ok.

4. **Share your happiness.** Offering social support and kindness to others is an effort that pays you back. In the book *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*, Stephen Post found that teens who are giving, hopeful and socially effective are also happier, more active, involved and engaged than their counterparts. When you give, you feel useful and valued and see things in a more positive manner.

Adapted from: [mequilibrium.com](http://mequilibrium.com)

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**Print and Share Bulletins**

See this issue’s bulletins for great resources to share with your congregations. Print and stuff in weekly worship booklets or other church newsletters, use as a small group handout or forward to church groups you think could benefit from the topic. We support you in your efforts to create a more vital church.

**BULLETIN #1:** The Eyes Have It!

**BULLETIN #2:** Pets for Health

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**Resources**

The Center for Health offers a host of resources at [wespath.org/center-for-health/](http://wespath.org/center-for-health/)

- **Well-Being Toolkits**
- **Webinar Series—Well-Being Tools**
- **Wespath’s Sustainable Investment Report**
- **Clergy Benefits Academy**
- **Deskercise and stretch break videos**
- **CFH articles related to each of the five dimensions of well-being**
- **Clergy Well-Being Survey Report**
- **Financial Well-Being—Wespath selection of articles about retirement, financial planning, family events and other topics**
- **Newsletters and Bulletins**
- **Healthy You...Healthy UMC brochure**

**External Resources**

- **National Institute for Mental Health**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**—Healthy Living resources

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**Let Us Know**

If you have questions or comments, please contact us anytime at: wellnesssteam@wespath.org

The journey to well-being lasts a lifetime. Sometimes the path is smooth; and other times, there are bumps in the road and work to be done to restore balance. With patience, persistence and support from the Center for Health—you can do it!

**Disclaimer**

The Center for Health is a division of Wespath Benefits and Investments. The Center for Health’s sharing of this general information should not be construed as, does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as medical or other professional advice or services on any specific matter.

Links to websites other than those of the Center for Health and the UMC Health Ministry Network are offered as a service to our readers; we were not involved in their production and are not responsible for their content.