Hygge for a Happier You

As winter starts to make its presence known, you may get out warmer coats, find hats and mittens, and make sure boots still fit and are in good repair. This is also a good time to explore Hygge (pronounced Hoo-guh). Hygge is a Danish word and while it doesn’t have an exact definition, it conveys a sense of comfort and coziness. According to the World Happiness Report*, Denmark is one of the happiest countries in the world despite the long, dark and cold winters. In order to make the most of this time, Danes focus on creating an atmosphere of comfort, coziness, contentment and living in the moment—spending time with friends and family, getting outside when the weather is good, enjoying and celebrating the small things in life.

Whatever Hygge means for you, practice it this winter. An example could be reading your favorite book in your most comfortable chair under a blanket made by a loved one, while drinking hot chocolate, tea or citrus punch (check out the recipe on page three). Or it might mean making your favorite chicken noodle soup recipe and inviting neighbors over for dinner.

* Read more at worldhappiness.report/
PERSONAL SUCCESS STORY

Hygge for Health

I’ve read a lot about the fact that if you’re happier you’re healthier—happiness reduces stress and cortisone levels which may result in lower blood pressure, a healthier heart and more. I have a neurological condition that sometimes requires mind over matter to offset, so I intentionally practice happiness. When our resident Well-Being Manager, Leah Holzwarth, told me about the “Hygge” concept, it immediately resonated with me. Even though I hadn’t heard of the word, Hygge describes perfectly the mindset I am conscious of every day. And what do you know, I’m Scandanavian! You see, Hygge is the Danish word for well-being. The practice of Hygge refers to feelings of togetherness and comfort; about being, not having.

Try these intentional activities to increase your happy factor:

- **MINDFULNESS**—This ancient practice is aimed at enjoying the present moment for peace of mind. It is gaining popularity in the medical community for reducing stress and managing pain. (Think Hygge!)
- **GRATITUDE**—Gratitude not only leads to happiness but protects the mind from stress and depression.
- **EXERCISE**—Health does equal happiness, and vice versa.
- **ALTRUISM**—Enjoy what you do. Many in the Church do the work because of a calling, but burn-out, compassion fatigue and long hours can work against contentment. Reflect and review your situation to ensure you are pursuing your true purpose and expending energy in meaningful activities.
- **VULNERABILITY**—Be true to your authentic self. People will meet you there and respond with truth and connection.

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Ingrid Hansen
HealthFlex Participant
and Receptionist/Security
Wespath Benefits and Investments

Although happiness is a universal goal, recent science is exploring ways to generate, sustain and multiply the happiness factor. Research has confirmed that we can change the neural pathways of our brain with conscious effort.

According to Project Happiness, only 10% of our happiness is due to our external circumstances, 50% from our genes.

**40% is accounted for by intentional practice and the choices we make.**

Shawn Anchor, leading happiness expert and author of *The Happiness Advantage,* says that most people are following the incorrect formula that success leads to happiness. He says, “It is the other way around. A positive brain is 31% more productive than one that is negative, neutral or stressed.”

Ingrid Hansen
HealthFlex Participant
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**ASK A PROFESSIONAL**

Leah Holzwarth
Well-Being Manager, Wespath Benefits and Investments

**Happiness Skills Can Be Learned**

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**Hygge for Health**

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Being happy collectively shapes the mood of those around you. It does not always come easy, but it’s a conscious choice. When home, I employ strategies that make me feel better and happier. I relax with my spouse and pets, and create art. I have a few pictures in particular that calm me just by looking at them.

You can’t predict tomorrow, you can’t change what’s happening in the world and at times you can be your own worst enemy. What you can do is change the way you look at today. You have the power to change your mindset—Hygge is a tool that can get you there!
Germs Can Be Mean, So Keep Your Hands Clean!

Keeping our hands clean is one of the most important things we can do to stop the spread of germs and stay healthy. Whether you are at home, at work, traveling, sick or well, good hand hygiene can protect everyone.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends soap and water as the best way to reduce germs:

- Wet your hands with clean, running water and apply soap.
- Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Be aware that sanitizers do not kill all bacteria.

Germs most often get into the body through our eyes, nose and mouth. To stay healthy, keep your hands away from your face. Always wash your hands before you prepare food or eat, after using the toilet, and before and after visiting someone who is sick.

For more details visit [cdc.gov/handwashing](http://cdc.gov/handwashing)

Easy Healthy Recipe

**CITRUS PUNCH**

**INGREDIENTS**
- 6 cups grapefruit juice*, unsweetened
- 3 cups orange juice, unsweetened
- 2 liters sparkling water, plain
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 whole orange
- 12 cloves

**DIRECTIONS**

Pre-heat oven to 300 degrees. Push cloves into orange and place orange in a baking pan. Bake for 30 minutes. Combine the juices and honey in a large serving bowl. Stir well, until the honey is dissolved. Carefully add the baked orange to the bowl. Allow the mixture to stand for at least 2 hours before serving. Just before serving, add the sparkling water and stir well. Garnish with fresh sprigs of mint.

**CALORIES**
34 per 4 oz. serving

* Grapefruit and grapefruit juice can interact with several common medications, please check with your pharmacist or physician before consuming.

WELL-BEING TIPS FOR LEADERS

Resolutions—Make Them Last!

Realistic resolutions are more likely to be kept. As you continually strive to lead by example, we share these tips from the American Psychological Association on how to set yourself up for success.

The American Psychological Association offers tips on how to set attainable goals:

- **START SMALL**
  Make promises that you can keep. Rather than resolving to exercise every day, aim for three days a week.

- **TAKE A GRADUAL APPROACH**
  Making lifestyle changes may take time. Try replacing one unhealthy behavior at a time.

- **DON’T GO IT ALONE**
  Talking about your resolutions and finding support can help you reach your goals.

- **GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK**
  No matter how hard people try, no one achieves perfection. Don’t give up on your resolutions if you make a mistake or have a setback.

- **ASK FOR HELP**
  If you need help to achieve your goal, seek the support of a health care professional. Therapists can help you find strategies that make your goals more attainable.
Setting Healthy Financial Goals

Having a sound financial savings plan is important to financial well-being. Money tucked away is useful for everything from large planned purchases, such as cars and homes, to paying college tuition and unexpected medical bills.

Financial security can improve well-being in other areas, such as emotional well-being from reduced financial stress.

It is also important to practice good spending habits:
- Live within your means
- Save for purchases
- Limit impulse buys
- Try generic household goods instead of name-brand

How to Start with Setting and Attaining Your Family’s Financial Goals

Try following this action plan:

**ACTION PLAN**

- Document expenses
- Find ways to save
- Set saving goals
- Develop a budget and keep to it
- Give to church or charity
- Make it fun for all

Your action plan should involve all family members.\(^1\) Incorporate tangible ways all can participate (piggy banks or savings jars for younger members, online apps\(^2\) for older family members). Then, work toward the goal by sharing activities, such as cooking meals and enjoying a night at home, planning an inexpensive night out or participating in physical activities that save costs on gym memberships, etc.

Review your spending habits and savings goals often, adjust where needed and be sure to celebrate your achievements.

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1 See tips from Family Financial Well-Being bulletin for age-specific ideas.
2 App suggestions include Bankaroo and Piggybot for kids, and Level Money and Mint Personal Finance for older family members.

Adapted from Wespath Benefits and Investments’ Setting Healthy Financial Goals webinar, umcdisipleship.org/resources/healthy-families-series-financial-health-setting-healthy-goals

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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:** Family Financial Well-Being

**BULLETIN #2:** Five Healthy Eating Travel Tips

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Resources

The Center for Health offers a host of resources at wespath.org/center-for-health/

- Well-Being Toolkits
- Webinar Series—Well-Being Tools
- Wespath’s Sustainable Investment Report
- revitup!
- 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

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.

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