

Summer Fun

June is the kick-off for the summer months. We often think of summer as a time to relax. But stress management and relaxation needs to be included as an important part of every day! Of course, relaxing means kicking back and taking it easy, like enjoying a cold drink while sitting outside on a warm and sunny day. Relaxing can also be active, such as shifting your activities by doing something that refreshes your body and mind, like taking a walk or doing an enjoyable hobby. We will be including more on hobbies in the next few issues!



Hobbies

What is a hobby? A hobby is an activity you do regularly in your free time. Many people don't even realize they already have a hobby. There are many different hobbies that benefit us in different ways.

Some hobbies have physical wellness benefits. Yoga, running, meditation are great hobbies because they require physical movement, stretching and can help relieve stress.

Gardening is another great hobby. Not only does it have the economic and health benefit of growing your own produce, but it can also improve your physical wellness.

Tending to your garden requires physical labor, which can be great exercise. There are many things that you can grow in your garden such as flowers, shrubberies and fruits and vegetable. Many people enjoy growing their own tomato plants, with a payoff in both physical activity and nutrition!

Art is a great hobby and it can involve painting, drawing, writing and sculpting as well as many other things. Art is a great way to express your creative side and to relieve stress. Since art requires our creativity, it can help our intellectual wellness and, for many, contributes to spiritual wellness. Sharing a creation or creating with others boosts social wellness. Displaying beautiful and meaningful creations enhances our environmental wellness, too.

Almost everyone has experienced a hobby they truly enjoy. However, as adults, many people get caught up in work and other life responsibilities and feel they do not have time for a hobby. Whether you are a young adult or older adult it is a perfect time to reactivate an old hobby or learn a new hobby. If you're struggling to decide what hobby to get involved in think about whether you already have one. Or think about trying a new hobby. There are so many to choose from and remember hobbies can help strengthen many dimensions of wellness.



Drawing Bridges to Wellness

By William Latin

Recently, I went to the Queens Museum in Flushing Meadow Park, NY for their 3rd annual special exhibition celebrating creative arts therapy week. The exhibit featured artists who live with depression and/or anxiety and channel their challenges through art.



The exhibit highlighted the theme of bridging the gap to wellness. Many of the artists used that theme literally and portrayed actual bridges in their art.

One particular piece I enjoyed was “Death is on the Brink, Life is Right across the Bridge.” →

On one side of the bridge, there were thunderstorms and it looked dreary. On the other side, there were more hopeful images. The images looked toward the future filled with love, joy and family. The artist’s statement reads, “death will not take me out from my addictive life. That’s why my bridge back to life will be completed with love, faith and prosperity.”

The photograph below also shows a second work of art. The flowers pictured are titled, “New Beginning.” The artist’s statement reads, “Starting fresh and leaving the bad things behind. Getting to a place where I feel relaxed, content, and peaceful.”

In addition to visual art, the exhibit included poetry. I enjoyed this poem by H.F.:

Rejoice!

As I bask in clarity,
reminiscing about the great times,
recollections of dreams
are becoming clearer.
now dreams have arrived
Replacing nightmares. Dreams
describe a righteous path
becoming available for consumption.
For behold, my sneakers are designed,
once more, for running again.
Rejoice!

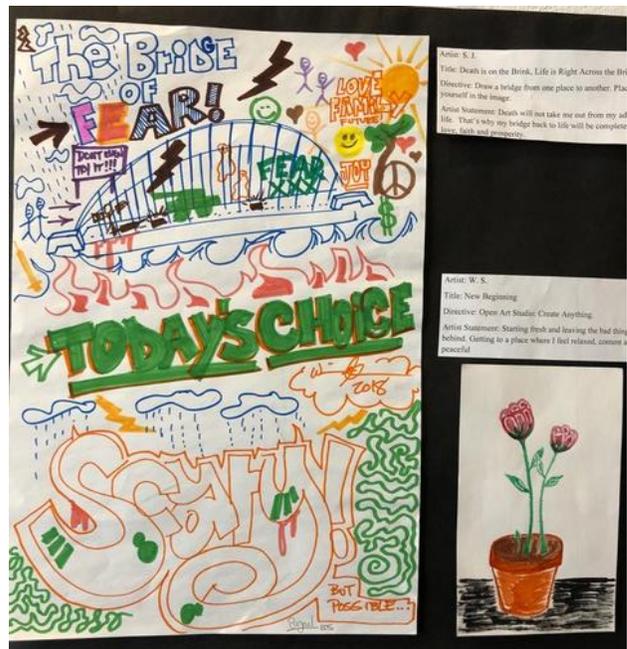


Exhibit (continued from previous page)

Another piece I found interesting was a sculpture of a bridge surrounded by art tools such as paintbrushes and paint bottles. It was clever how the whole art piece was the preparation for the sculpture. Each paint bottle sculpture had a different label on it such as Zen, creativity, imagination, reflection, and balance. It seemed to me to be a metaphor for the different elements the artist puts into their art.



Overall, I found the exhibit to be fascinating. I learned a lot about the artists and their stories of their journey to wellness.

Reducing Clutter

Tidying up seems to be all the rage lately. For many people it's easiest to relax in a clean and tidy space. But your home, workspace, or car are not the only places that could use tidying up—what about your mind?

We enjoyed a recent article in the *Health Advocate Newsletter* and blog on emotional clutter. They recommend these tips:

- Use a journal to record worries then revisit them later to identify possible solutions. For more on journaling, see our wellness tool on: <https://www.center4healthandsdc.org/integrated-health--mental-health.html>
- Reduce input by unsubscribing to unwanted marketing emails. Tell friends and family what you like to hear and what you'd rather hear, such as political news or celebrity updates. Limit your internet time and check the news less often. Take in what uplifts you and avoid or limit the rest.

Meditation or calming activities like yoga also can help clear your mind and allow your thoughts to float by, rather than clogging up your head.

Remember to pause, breathe, and relax!

See our new resource: 5 Steps to Mental & Physical Wellness (excerpt on next page)

References and Resources

Thanks, as always, to William Latin! His articles this month are on hobbies and on his visit to the Queens Museum. Other than the pictures from that exhibit, which were taken by William, illustrations are from pixabay.com

- Check out this article from hobbyhelp.com, which contains a list of over 100 different hobbies: < <https://hobbyhelp.com/inspiration/list-of-hobbies/>
- For some quick tips to get you started on gardening, check out realsimple.com: <https://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/gardening/outdoor/gardening-101>
- For more about Marie Kondo's "The life-changing magic of tidying up," see her website: <https://konmari.com/pages/about>
- Emotional clutter: <http://blog.healthadvocate.com/2019/03/reduce-your-emotional-clutter/>





5 Steps to Good Mental & Physical Wellness



Step #1: Pause & Breathe

- ☼ Meditation and mindfulness activities help you manage and reduce stress—both immediate and long-term.
- ☼ Regular mindfulness practice improves mental focus and boosts compassion towards yourself and others.
- ☼ Yoga, tai chi, and similar activities offer exercise, mindfulness, and relaxation, especially if you pay attention to your breathing and focus on the present moment.



Step #2: Reach Out and Connect with Someone

- ☼ Talk to a friend or supporter—social support relieves stress and can even keep you healthy.
- ☼ Hug a pet! Spending time with animals can be calming and make you feel less alone. Taking care of a pet can give you a sense of purpose and responsibility.
- ☼ Spend time around others—join a club or book group, volunteer as a friendly visitor, or help with a community project.



Step #3: Focus on Sleep

- ☼ Good sleep habits (also called “sleep hygiene”) can help you get a good night’s sleep.
- ☼ Getting enough sleep and rest refreshes your mind and your mood, helps your body heal, and improves your memory.
- ☼ Be consistent with the times you go to sleep and wake up. Sleep in a cool, dark space. Turn off screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime. Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime.



Step #4: Move More

- ☼ Try walking just 10 minutes 3 times/day for 3 days out of each week.
- ☼ Physical activity helps control weight, improve health, lower your risk of heart disease, and lengthen your life.
- ☼ Walking and other aerobic activities can help improve your mood and reduce symptoms of depression.



Step #5: Eliminate Harmful Substances

- ☼ Cut down or quit smoking, other types of tobacco and nicotine, alcohol, opioids, and other harmful drugs.
- ☼ Many harmful substances cause mental health problems and are linked to depression and suicide.
- ☼ Alcohol, marijuana, and other substances can disrupt your sleep, and many harmful substances are associated with increased health problems, including cancer, liver problems, heart disease, and difficulty breathing



Get the complete “5 Steps” document at www.cspnj.org (click on “resources”).