

A New Year, More Wellness

We are pleased to bring you another year of *Words of Wellness*.

For many, New Year's Day is the launch of new goals and new plans. Some research suggests that beginning work on a new goal is most effective on "fresh start days" like the first of the year, or a Monday, or some other personally significant day, like a birthday. Other research suggests that linking your short-term goals and plans to a larger purpose or vision can increase commitment and success.

In this issue, you will find an article on the value of owning a guiding vision. A vision or a sense of purpose in life provides a compass, or a North Star, that helps us know where to go and what to do. By understanding our personal vision and values, we have a map although maybe a slightly fuzzy one.

Wellness Inventory

We have revised and shortened our popular *Wellness Inventory*. This tool will help you think about what you are doing now in terms of your wellness habits. To use this, you rate a series of items and score yourself on each of the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. This tool gives you a way of thinking about what you are doing now for your personal wellness and may inspire something you want to strengthen or improve.

To access the Wellness Inventory

pswarbrick@cspnj.org



The *Words of Wellness* newsletter is a monthly publication that brings you information, tips, and inspiration to help you on your own path to wellness.

We see wellness as a conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of, and make choices for, a more satisfying lifestyle. A wellness lifestyle includes a self-defined balance of health habits—self-defined because everyone has individual needs and preferences. The balance of activity, social contact, and sleep, etc, varies from person to person. We are pleased to help you define and pursue your wellness!



Insulate Your Vision: Own It!

By Jacquese Armstrong

The beginning of every year is a fresh start and we often think of goals and visions. One of the tools that has greatly augmented my wellness and recovery journey is the possession of a vision. In all eight dimensions, it can be the guiderail to keep you on track and make you take that one extra step. However, because life is uncertain, there are steps you must take to insulate that vision so that it can flourish. I developed a process for this. I call it simply taking ownership.

I define vision like this. It is that ability to think about or plan for the future with imagination. Imagination, being the conception of something that is not yet real. It's a formation in your mind.

Vision or ideas are like seeds. And seeds need the right environments to grow in. But, even when you take care and give it the most ideal environment there may be some opposition: wind, strong rains, tornadoes. You may be accosted intellectually, emotionally and spiritually in pursuit of your vision. As I said, you must insulate yourself and your vision by taking ownership.

One of the definitions of ownership is the act, state, or right of possessing something. I maintain that is a right to own a vision.

I am of the generation where they believed recovery from what they called an "SMI" was an impossibility. Thanks to my Maker, I have always had tenacity and a determination to seek a goal. I lost some battles along the way, but I'm still fighting, and I feel I'm winning the war because I take ownership of any goal/vision I take on.

This doesn't mean I achieve everything I set out to accomplish; sometimes mental health challenges get in the way. But I own my right to have and pursue a vision.

I own it and go after it tenaciously and, in the end, I have achieved either a life lesson and/or a goal.

Visions are important. If you have none, you will be swept in any direction the wind blows, positive or negative. And none of us want to end up with negativity as our guide; its end is not only unfruitful but uncomfortable. However, once you find your vision, standing in your truth, you must give yourself the permission to own it.

So, I've outlined three steps to get you on your way to owning your vision.

1. Let go.
2. Give yourself permission to be.
3. Give yourself permission to feel.

The first thing you must do is *let go* of any preconceived negative notions of you, including past mistakes and disappointments, fair or unfair. They will block your vision—literally and figuratively speaking. And, do not let your stage of recovery and wellness or, in my case, age, influence or limit the scope of your vision. It is yours, up-close and personal. It is what YOU want for your future.

Letting go of negative baggage and preconceived notions is essential if you want to fly. And, if you're like me, you want to soar in, claim that vision and reside in it.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist monk, has a very insightful way at looking at why it's so hard for us to let go of ill-conceived notions of ourselves. He says:

People have a hard time letting go of their suffering. Out of a fear of the unknown, they prefer suffering that is familiar.

Letting go of that fear, is a big factor to owning your vision.

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Owning your vision (continued from page 2)

The next step to owning your vision is: give yourself ***permission to just be***. When we think of just being or being in the moment's truth, we think of mindfulness.

Mindfulness is so important. It keeps you healthy. It keeps your mind clear. It would seem to be incompatible with forward motion, thinking, or striving for success.

But, with mindfulness, you learn to appreciate the view of the path along the way. There's no judgment in mindfulness. It just is. And, it's important to view yourself in this way: in the moment and without judgment. It just makes you feel good in your skin and this is the path to personal power, your path to ownership.

So, you've let go...given yourself permission to just be and now you must ***permit yourself to feel***. I'll explain with a story from my wellness journey.

I lived in isolation for years because I knew I had unreal sensations and I was not aware of peer communities where I lived. I felt that I was an oddity and had made a great faux pas within the Universe and I was being punished for it. I was angry and bitter for decades. I felt like I dwelled in a no man's land, wishing I were dead.

When I started living graciously and mindfully, I began to see each moment of my life in a different Light. I began to appreciate the beauty and downplay the negative forces. I began to take time every day to commune and learn from nature. And, since I am primarily a poet, it enhanced my understanding of myself and others. I began to, after a while, like and love my life again. The same life I tried to throw away. The same life I prayed to God to end. The same life that, I thought for a time, was tragically done and hopeless.

This is how I learned to let myself feel again.

I'm not saying everything was or is rosy. You will get hurt. But with mindfulness and appreciation (practicing gratitude) you can make it through the uncomfortable times.

Because, you must feel. Not only to fully appreciate your life, but also, to capture the true Purpose of your being: your vision.

You need to feel because the true gems are in the journey: the nuggets of wisdom, the joy and even the heartache serve to make you the person who can own the vision you perceive.

However, there is one more definition you need to know before you give yourself permission to own your vision. Owning means taking responsibility and taking responsibility in vision means action.

Wellness and recovery are a never-ending journey. However, having a vision and owning that vision makes the journey sweeter, and always gives you a reason to go one step further in the lean times.

So, give yourself permission. Own your life. Live out loud and on purpose. You're going to be here anyway, why not be in command?



Kindness Calendar

How hard would it be to do one random act of kindness a day? What about each week or month?

To inspire more kindness in the world, the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has created a website, where they offer curricula for schools, free posters, information on the science of kindness, and kindness calendars.

Kind acts may help lower your blood pressure, reduce pain and anxiety, and increase optimism.

A suggestion from the calendar for January 2020:

Compliment the first three people you see on January 24 (National Compliment Day).

And don't forget to be kind to yourself, too!

Get your own calendars [here](#).

Puzzle out these Winter Wellness ideas!

O	D	O	A	H	A	V	E	F	U	N	T	Y	H
E	L	D	T	E	T	G	O	O	D	F	O	O	D
P	D	S	S	U	N	P	L	U	G	E	Y	S	T
D	E	U	S	N	I	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	E
R	A	Y	E	E	F	I	N	A	N	C	I	A	L
P	O	E	N	D	A	E	R	T	E	L	O	I	E
J	U	A	I	N	M	R	A	W	C	O	R	E	N
O	H	T	P	P	T	R	O	P	P	U	S	P	O
B	T	W	P	F	I	I	S	S	L	O	P	C	L
E	E	E	A	N	E	E	N	L	P	T	U	O	A
K	P	L	H	R	A	O	T	B	E	A	C	C	E
I	A	L	R	E	L	A	X	O	B	E	F	O	M
N	T	N	I	M	R	E	P	P	E	P	P	A	I
D	B	E	T	H	A	N	K	F	U	L	O	Y	T

TIME ALONE
HAVE FUN
READ
SUPPORT
HAPPINESS
GOOD FOOD
RELAX
BE THANKFUL
SLEEP
EAT WELL
COCOA
REST
FINANCIAL
PEPPERMINT
BE KIND
WARM
UNPLUG
PAUSE
FRIENDS
JOY

Play this puzzle online at : <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/783514/>

Wishes for Wellness in the New Year!

References and Resources

- Thanks to Jacquese Armstrong for another wonderful contribution this month. Illustrations are listed online as free for reuse without attribution from pixabay.com
- Fresh start days: Dai, H., Milkman, K. L., & Riis, J. (2014). The fresh start effect: Temporal landmarks motivate aspirational behavior. *Management Science*, 10(60):2563–2582. See also Hennecke, M., & Converse, B. A. (2017). Next week, next month, next year: How perceived temporal boundaries affect initiation expectations. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(8), 918-926.
- The value of a larger vision to support a short-term goal: Carver, C. S. & Scheier, M. F. (1996). Self-regulation and its failures. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(1), 32-40.
- The definitions of “wellness” and “wellness lifestyle” on page 1 are from Swarbrick, M. (1997). A wellness model for clients. *Mental Health Special Interest Section Quarterly*, 20(1), 1-4; Swarbrick, M. (2006). A wellness approach. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 29(4), 311–314. <https://doi.org/10.2975/29.2006.311.314>
- The [Greater Good Science Center](#) at Berkeley studies “the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being” (AKA the Science of Happiness) and “teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society.” One of the many resources listed on their website is a small article on finding your life purpose, which they say is associated with positive mental health and physical health.: https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_find_your_purpose_in_life
- Kindness Calendars and other downloadable resources: <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/printables>
- TU Collaborative: <http://tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Helping-People-to-Connect-to-the-Religious-Congregations-and-Spiritual-Groups-of-Their-Choice.pdf>

