

DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY HABITS



It's likely during this pandemic many people have developed positive new habits like exercising at home, preparing their own food more often, getting proper sleep, spending quality time with family, etc. When the world returns to work, remember the hard work and effort you have put in to develop these habits and give yourself credit for doing so. Then, focus on what you need to do to ensure you maintain the good habits you have developed. If you don't feel like you have developed any good habits during the pandemic, you can refocus now on what good habits you wish to develop (or which unhealthy habits you want to break). Here are some ideas to help you develop and maintain healthy habits:

START SMALL

When it comes to developing a new healthy habit, all too often people want to create big changes quickly. It seems feasible in our minds to aspire to eat more nutritious foods, to meditate for 20 minutes every day, or to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity in four days per week. However, when we actually start doing these activities, we quickly lose motivation, get frustrated, discouraged, and even quit. Instead, start small and work your way up. Start with five minutes of activity and add a minute every few days or make it a point to incorporate at least one fruit or vegetable into a daily meal, then make it two and slowly build on that as you are ready.

DETERMINE WHERE TO FOCUS

Often times we have many different habits we want to develop and it can be difficult to know where to start or which ones to focus on. [WELCOA's Definition of Wellness](#) recognizes active pursuit to understand and fulfill your individual needs in seven areas of our lives. Think about each of the following areas of your life; identify your stamina and performance levels in each in addition to any obstacles or challenges you face. For those areas where you feel you could improve, prioritize your growth and seek out resources to focus on improvement. Set small goals that you know you can achieve and won't be too far of a stretch to focus on. Celebrate all the small victories as you achieve them and continue to set bigger goals. In time, look back and give yourself credit for your personal growth!

HEALTH - Beyond absence of mental and physical illness, health is a feeling of strength and energy from your body and mind.

MEANING - Feeling part of something bigger than yourself. Knowing that your work matters. Having purpose in your life.

SAFETY - Knowing that you are safe from physical and psychological harm. Feeling secure enough to take calculated risks and show vulnerability. Free of concern about meeting basic life needs.

CONNECTION - Experiencing positive, trusting relationships with others. Feeling a sense of belonging, acceptance and support.

ACHIEVEMENT - Feeling you have the support, resources and autonomy to achieve your goals. Succeeding at meeting your individual goals and work aspirations.

GROWTH - Feeling like you are progressing. Learning and being challenged to use and expand on your strengths.

RESILIENCY - Viewing life with optimism. Feeling grateful and expressing appreciation. Feeling validated and encouraged.

KNOW WHAT NOT TO DO

Write down the things that drain your joy and creativity. Be honest with yourself about those things that are distractions but that you know you typically turn to when stressed, tired or depleted. Replace avoidance and escapist activities that bring you down or numb your ability to feel with mindfulness or self-care practices that develop your awareness and relationship to self.

ASSESS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME

Evaluate your perspective of time. Do you view time as a hindrance or often feel pressed for time? If so, it may be beneficial to change the way you perceive time. Instead of your perspective being that time goes too fast or there is never enough time, reframe your perspective to view time as an ally. Many times when we are in a mindset that is negative about time, it's when we are working on or focusing on things we don't like or don't want to do. Schedule certain times of your week when you carve out a few hours for those things - or even better, schedule the tasks you aren't as excited about before something you want to do. Incentivize yourself that if you complete that task, you get to reward yourself with something you enjoy. If you have something you are responsible for that consistently weighs you down, have a conversation with your partner, co-worker, boss or someone that could help you or give you support to manage those items or reframe the way you look at them.