

A group of people are seated around a long table in a restaurant, enjoying a meal. The table is filled with various dishes, including roasted chicken, salads, and bread. The atmosphere is warm and social. The text 'COMMUNITY & EMOTIONAL' is overlaid in white, with a sunburst graphic above it.

COMMUNITY & EMOTIONAL

WELLNESS

Thrive

NOVEMBER TOOLKIT



Community well-being is one of the six pillars which guide the Thrive OK program. Community well-being is important to our overall wellness because we all have a need for connection to the people around us. Many things can boost our community well-being, and some tips and tricks are included in the toolkit below.

According to Tom Rath and Jim Harter, Community well-being is a combination of living in the right place that is a good fit for you, being of service in your community and involvement in community groups or organizations. Each of these things can be improved with some small effort. Random acts of kindness can enhance your daily interactions.

Remember that your community doesn't have to be geographical. Examples of communities you can belong to include:

Your church community.

Your knitting group community.

Your coffee shop community.

Your school/work community.

Any communities bringing together people with special identities (diet, health, recovery, etc.).

There are steps you can take to improve your community well-being. Rath and Harter suggest you talk to people about your passions and interests. You may meet and talk to someone who can connect you to groups or organizations that you like. Opt into events within your community(ies). Identify your passions through reading and journaling exercises, and then join groups or activities calling to those passions. You can check out the Thrive website at <http://thrive.ok.gov/resources/wellness-resources> for a list of ways to get involved with organizations and communities around Oklahoma.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Focus on Connections

Reflect on the meaning of the holidays and on the closeness of your relationships. It's not in the amount of money that you spend. Rather, it's in how much love and joy you share that will create the quality of the season. The beautifully wrapped presents and the food on the table are far less important than the people in your life.

Communicate Consciously

Communicating consciously can prevent emotional strain with family. Before you speak, ask yourself these three questions: (1) Is what I am about to say true? (2) Is it necessary? (3) Is it kind?

Remember the Season

Gratitude is a gift of conscious recognition that we have many blessings in our lives. Even in times when it seems things are going poorly, it can pay off to focus on the positive. Enjoy the day and be sure to tell those people in your life how much you appreciate them.

Perform Random Acts of Kindness

Random acts of kindness are defined as any act in kindness where nothing is expected in return. It is the highest form of love. Perform a small act of kindness (or many) during this season. Anonymously paying someone's bill at a restaurant, paying for the next person's coffee in line behind you at the café, finding opportunities to give a compliment, leaving a nice note for your mail carrier to let them know you appreciate their hard work, or even something as simple as a smile can spread some holiday cheer. There are countless opportunities for this throughout a day.

Commit to Your Emotional Well-being

Recognize that your needs and feelings are just as important as other peoples' needs and feelings. You have a right to say no to an event or responsibility if you do not have time for it – even if it's because you'd rather spend your time relaxing! Trust and believe in yourself and in your future. It is never too late to establish a happy attitude.

MINDFULNESS

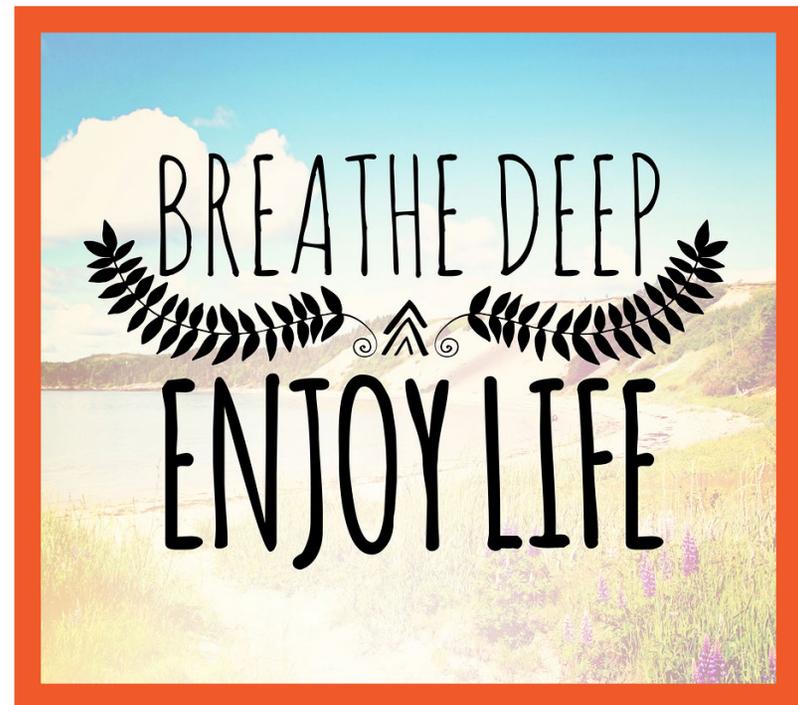
One tool you can use to help maintain your cool during the holidays is mindfulness. Visit our [April Week 3 Toolkit – Slow Down and Be Mindful](#) for more information on the benefits that come from purposefully and non-judgmentally staying in present moment awareness. In that toolkit, we discuss the profound mental and physical benefits that can result from living mindfully. Mindfulness can be cultivated through formal and informal practices.

Formal practices, like meditating, for even five minutes a day, can reap profound benefits on well-being. Informal practices teach that we stay rooted to the present experience through whatever routine activities we have. While you are washing the dishes, notice the temperature of the water, the weight of the dish, the gleam of the water that washes the soap away. While you brush your teeth, notice the smell of the toothpaste, pause, notice the taste in your mouth, pause, and notice how your body feels in its position.

Mindfulness Activity:

Next time you find yourself in a moment of high stress, pain or other types of emotional discomfort, remember this breathing technique: Take a step back, literally, and bring your attention to your breath. Start to draw your breath deep into your abdomen, and lengthen each exhale (feels like pushing out your belly like a balloon). With each inhale, bring your breath deeper and deeper. With each exhale, release even more tension than the last time. Begin to notice how your hands feel. Take another breath. Notice how your shoulders feel. Relax them, and take another deep breath. Notice how your back feels. Relax a little bit further, and then take another deep breath in. Acknowledge what emotions are running through you at this exact

moment, and take another deep breath. Notice those emotions as if you are an observer, and take three more deep breaths. If you must continue staying engaged with whatever you were doing before, open your eyes and move slowly through your action or conversation until it has been completed. If you can take a few minutes break, go to another room (even the bathroom) and set a timer on your phone for five minutes – or even just one minute. Continue the breathing exercise and rest, reminding yourself of this truth: “I am doing my best!” Go back out there when you are ready.



To help with your holiday gatherings even more, try these easy and healthy Thanksgiving recipes. They could become a staple addition to your table.

ROASTED SWEET POTATOES

(Serves 5)

Ingredients

1 lb. sweet potatoes (about 3 medium), diced

1 fresh sprig of rosemary

1 tablespoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon cloves

5 cloves of garlic

1 tablespoon olive or coconut oil

Salt and pepper to taste

½ cup water

Optional: ¼ cup brown sugar or honey & ¼ cup boiling water (Note: this is considered “added sugar” and will add extra calories)

Directions

- Heat oven to 350 F.
- Dice sweet potatoes, peel and chop garlic and run through the rosemary leaves with a knife to release the internal fragrance and taste.
- Add sweet potatoes, ½ cup water, rosemary, cinnamon, cloves, garlic, oil, salt and pepper to an oven-safe dish. Mix well to incorporate spices.
- Cover dish with foil and put in the oven for about 30-40 minutes, or until sweet potatoes are soft all the way through. Uncover the foil and broil on high for about 5-10 minutes, or until the potatoes get crispy.
- Pull dish out of the oven and serve. Be careful, it's hot.
- Optional: If you like your sweet potatoes a little more sweet, you can mix ¼ cup brown sugar or honey with ¼ cup boiling water to make a sweet syrup, and then pour over the potatoes.

CRANBERRY SAUCE FROM SCRATCH

Ingredients:

1 lb. fresh raw cranberries
1 cup freshly squeezed apple juice

Directions:

Add both to a small pot, and slowly bring to a boil. Make sure to stir it from time to time. Cranberries will pop as they heat up. The consistency will get thicker as more cranberries pop. Once they are all popped, the sauce is done. Pour or spoon into a heat-safe bowl, cover and chill in the refrigerator until Thanksgiving meal is served.



BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

(Serves 8; blender needed)

Ingredients:

1 butternut squash (whole or frozen cubed; if whole peel, seed and dice)
1 sweet potato, washed and cut into chunks
2 large carrots, washed and chopped
1 onion, peel and chopped
4 cups of bone broth or chicken stock, as needed
2 tablespoons butter, olive oil or coconut oil
2 cloves of garlic
Salt and pepper to taste (you'll need more salt if using bone broth)
Dash of pumpkin pie spice, for garnish (optional)

Directions:

- Melt butter or add oil to large pot over medium-high. Add squash, sweet potato, carrots, onion and garlic and let cook until brown (about 5-10 minutes).
- Add chicken stock/bone broth and bring to boil. Once boiled, reduce heat and let simmer for 45 minutes, or until squash and sweet potato are tender.
- Pour the mixture into blender; fill only halfway (so you will need to work in batches). Cover and pulse slowly and then blend until smooth. Repeat until all soup is blended.
- Add soup back to pot or into a glass bowl, add salt and pepper, and mix. When poured into bowl to eat, garnish with a dash of pumpkin pie spice. Enjoy!

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://new.ipfw.edu/affiliates/assistance/selfhelp/relationship-settingboundaries.html>

<http://www.essentiallifekills.net/personalboundaries.html>

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/blogs/establishing-healthy-family-relational-boundaries/>

Insight Timer

App for meditation

Boundaries and Relationships: Knowing, Protecting and Enjoying the Self

by Charles L. Whitfield

The Language of Letting Go

by Melody Beattie

Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life

by Marshall B. Rosenberg

Full Catastrophe Living

by Jon Kabat-Zinn

Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements

by Tom Rath and Jim Harter