

Basic ways to boost your health and wellbeing

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for Wallowa County Chieftain

No matter what the magazines and advertisements may say, there are no shortcuts to fitness and there is not a regimen that works for everyone. However, a few key strategies can make a big difference in your baseline and get you on the road to better physical and mental health.

Tune in to your body. It is so much more than a means of transportation for your brain. Learning to listen intently to your body alerts you to red flags before they become problems. Acknowledging issues such as tension, thirst, fatigue, and discomfort and immediately making necessary adjustments will often head off injury. Tuning in also offers an opportunity to get synchronized and focused.

Move. Choose an activity you enjoy walking, dancing, frisbee, pick-up basketball, running whatever works best for you. Your body was made to move, and all muscles (including your heart) need movement to keep functioning optimally. Approaching it more like play and less like a regimen often helps keep it part of your daily life.

Get adequate, quality sleep. Critical repairs and healing take place while you sleep. Sleep also promotes healthy growth and development and enhances immunity. While sleep needs vary between individuals, the National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7-9 hours of sleep. Teenagers should get 8-10 hours of sleep each night.

Spend more time in nature. Time spent in nature reduces stress and depression symptoms, and boosts immunity, metabolism, focus, creativity and happiness. Stopping to smell the flowers has both physiological and mental benefits.

Bump up your intake of fruits and vegetables. Fiber, nutrients, energy-boosting vitamins and minerals, variety, color and texture what's not to love? Make conscious decisions about what you eat, and pay attention to your food and your body while you're eating.

Connect with friends (human and furry). Loving contact and laughter causes people to release "happy hormones" like oxytocin. Doing something kind for someone else also raises self-esteem.



Check your posture. Slouching is hard on your back and limits your breathing and circulation. Sitting up "straight" doesn't mean holding your spine ram-rod straight, it is more about lifting and opening your chest and abdomen so everything can better expand and align.

Seek out variety. Your brain and body thrive when you mix up the routine. Giving your brain interesting problems to work on and your body varied exercise and food choices will keep all your systems stimulated, resilient, and prepared for action.

Hydrate. Bodies require water for most functions. Many aches and pains lessen with the simple action of drinking more water.

Don't lie. It turns out that lying causes stress, anxiety, and fatigue, all of which can lead to chronic headaches and compromised immunity.

Take care of your teeth. According to the Mayo Clinic, oral health offers a significant window onto overall health. Oral health may affect, or be affected by, multiple diseases and conditions ranging from diabetes to endocarditis, so give your mouth some proactive time and attention.

Breathe/meditate. Deep breathing releases tension, reduces stress hormones, and helps focus energy. Even brief periods of meditation during the day have been shown to boost calmness and productivity in multiple environments.

Be thankful. Research indicates that gratitude builds better health and happiness; regularly take time to note specifics, and consider sharing your observations with friends and family to spread the wealth.