Living Well Without Breaking A Sweat

Non-exercise activities and pursuits that positively affect well-being
Timothy Parrott, NIFS MANAGER
Brentwood, Tennessee
Today We Will Discuss

• Physical Wellness: The case for pursing an active lifestyle.

• Intellectual Wellness: What can you do to keep your brain fit for life?

• Spiritual and Emotional Wellness: Mindfulness matters.

• Practical tips to get you started:
  • NEAT Brain Boosters
  • Activities to try

• How to figure out what appeals to you.

• Local resources you can take advantage of today.
Physical Wellness
The case for pursuing an active lifestyle
Why should I stay physically active?
Sedentary aging leads to...

- Muscle loss of 5-7 pounds per decade
- Metabolic rate reduction of 3-5% per decade
- Bone loss of 1-3% per decade
- Fat gain of 15-20 pounds per decade
- Increased risk of disease
- Obesity: 36.5% of U.S. adults are obese
  - Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer
What Else You Can Avoid By Being Active…

- Weight gain
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Osteoporosis
- Depression
- Stress
- Slowed metabolism
- High cholesterol
- Boredom
- Dementia
- Sleepless nights
- Low energy
- Poor posture
- Falls
Physical Benefits

- Improved mood
- Improved sleep
- Decreased risk or maintenance of chronic disease
- Maintain/improve muscle mass
- Improved self image
- Increased endurance
- Decreased risk of falls and frailty
Social Benefits

• Engagement
  • Decreased depression
  • Decreased cognitive declines

• Group exercise

• Buddy exercising

• Shaping your community’s culture
Emotional Benefits

- Good mood endorphins
- Keeps you doing the things you love
- Personal pride and accomplishment
“NEAT”

NEAT = nonexercise activity thermogenesis

• Basically, NEAT encompasses the calories burned while living life – walking to dinner, fidgeting, typing, chewing gum, folding clothes, washing dishes, running errands, etc.
NEAT Brain Boosters

• NEAT brain booster activities are based on exercises that can:
  • Strengthen the corpus callosum (band of neural fibers connecting the two hemispheres of the brain)
  • Boost levels of key neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine
  • Improve mood
  • Decrease levels of cortisol
  • Raise a person’s stress threshold
  • Help in effectively managing stress
  • Increase self confidence
**NEAT** Brain Boosters in Action

- Postural brain booster: two-finger test
- Yoga brain boosters: breath work
- Dance brain boosters: 30-second dance party
Seated NEAT Brain Boosters

• Wiggle or tap the toes and fingers while watching TV or sitting at a desk.

• Stand up and sit down at least every 10-20 minutes (boosts metabolism and strengthens glutes and quads).

• After typing or writing for 5-10 minutes, stop and make circles with both wrists. Open and close the fingers. Repeat.

• While sitting at dinner or in a meeting with your legs under a table, subtly lift one leg at a time. Do this several times; then, as you lift, point your toes to the ground and, as you lower, point your toes up.

• Fidget! The thing that drove your teachers nuts is one of the things that started research on the benefits of NEAT.

• Give yourself a hand or foot massage.

• Knit, sew, paint, or draw

Every little bit helps!
Simple and Social NEAT Brain Boosters

• Get up and walk to get a drink of water and say hello to others along the way. Water consumption can improve cognitive performance, particularly visual attention and mood (Masento et al. 2014).

• Walk to talk to a neighbor instead of calling.

• Handwrite and send a note of gratitude once a week.

• Walk while you’re on a long phone call.

• Instead of lunch, schedule to meet a friend for a walk around a park while you chat and catch up.

• Pay cards or board games.
What can you do to keep your brain fit for life?
Learning and Engagement

• Learning builds up your cognitive reserve
  • People with higher levels of education have fewer “senior moments”
  • People who speak one language show symptoms of dementia four years before bilinguals

• Engaging in leisure activities reduces your risk of cognitive decline
  • i.e. playing an instrument, gardening, knitting
  • Watching TV increases your risk!
Puzzles and Brain Games

• Many people engage in brain games and puzzles because they are a FUN way to keep your mind sharp. There are many varieties of games you can play. There’s something for everyone!

• Benefits
  • Improve skills required for the specific games/puzzles you engage in
  • Potentially delay dementia by building up your cognitive reserve

• Variety available
  • Number games: Sudoku, Math problems
  • Word games: Crossword Puzzles, Riddles, Scrabble
  • Card/Board games: Jigsaw Puzzles, Bridge, Monopoly
Eat Well for Brain Health

• Eat more fruits and vegetables!
  • Leafy greens
  • Cruciferous vegetables
  • Berries

• Focus on whole grains

• Eat more Omega 3’s and less Omega 6’s
  • Foods high in Omega 6 fatty acids: vegetable oils (corn and soybean), conventionally raised animals, dairy and eggs from conventionally raised animals, fried foods
  • Foods high in Omega 3 fatty acids: wild caught fish, olive and canola oil, walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds

• Other foods your brain loves:
  • Spices: turmeric, cinnamon, black pepper
  • Coffee and tea
  • Eggs
  • Dark chocolate
Exercise

- 30 minutes of aerobic exercise on 5 days each week
  - Supports brain health
  - Supports neurogenesis and neuroplasticity
  - Can help improve memory and reduce risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease
  - Can help slow mental decline
Rest

- Aim for 8 hours each night
- Limit caffeine 8 hours before bedtime
- Limit electronic use after 7pm
- Expose your eyes to natural light in the morning and throughout the day
- Meditation, mindfulness, and spiritual practice
Emotional and Spiritual Wellness

Mindfulness matters
Benefits of mindfulness

- Develop an awareness of the physical response to stress
- Decrease the perceived severity of daily stressors
- Enhance the focus on positive thinking and positive daily events
- Deepen a sense of compassion
- Manage stress more effectively and productively
- Expand your world views
- Discover genuine happiness
- Establish and/or strengthen the mind-body connection
- Develop confidence and self-reliance
- Reduce chronic pain, stress, and anxiety
Mindfulness techniques

• Mindful meditation
• Breathing exercises
• Yoga
• Guided imagery exercises
• Daily gratitude journaling
• Observation lessons
mindfulness

present moment
acceptance
non-reactive
life
contentment
brain training
purpose

stress
attention
meditation
work
seeing things

body
clarity
physical
mental

nonjudgmental
intentional

moment
Just Being
purposefulness

thoughts
emotions

sensations
self-compassion

insight
Buddhist
Practical tips to start your “living well” journey
Getting Started

• Understand where you are
  • Evaluate your lifestyle

• Establish goals (S.M.A.R.T.)
  • Short Term
  • Long Term

• Meet with a professional
  • Here at home
  • Out in the community

• Start slowly and make gradual changes
  • It doesn’t happen over night!!
Figure out what appeals to you

Living well isn’t just about exercise!

• Start with asking your friends

• Your community has resources available
  • Fitness Center staff
  • Life enrichment team
  • Monthly Calendar & Newsletter
  • Internal TV station
  • Trip sign ups

• Join a club or take a class
Physical Wellness
Activities to Try

- NEAT activities
- Nature hikes/walking trail
- Water sports
  - Kayaking
  - Stand-up paddleboarding
- Nordic walking
- Segway tours
- Cooking classes
- Wine tasting
- Farmers market
- Golf
- Bowling
- Putt putt
- Billiards
- Croquet
- Corn toss/bags
- Bocce
- Shuffleboard
- Yoga
- Cross-country skiing
- Bike rides
- Snowshoeing
Intellectual Wellness: Activities to Try

- Trivia
- Scavenger hunts
- Escape Room
- Attend a lecture
- Take a class on Coursera
- Learn a new language (Rosetta Stone)
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Crosswords
- Sudoku
- Listening to music
- Board games
Spiritual and Emotional Wellness: Activities to Try

• Yoga
• Tai Chi
• Meditation
Online Resources

• Physical Wellness
  • https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/

• Online for brain fitness:
  • Luminosity
  • BrainHQ from Posit Science
  • Fit Brains by Rosetta Stone

• Emotional and Spiritual Wellness
  • Mindful meditation
    www.mindful.com/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started
  • Breathing exercises
    www.mindful.org/a-five-minute-breathing-meditation
  • Guided imagery exercises
    www.Dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html
  • Daily gratitude journaling
What can you start doing today?

Things you can do to live more actively as soon as you walk out these doors:

• NEAT brain boosters – all day, every day!

• Stop by the Fitness Center and talk to your Fitness Center Manager

• Check the community calendar