Wellbeing 101:
Tips and Strategies to Help You Focus on Wellbeing This Semester

www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu
www.csh.umn.edu
What is Wellbeing?

Wellbeing encompasses all aspects of our lives.

The Bakken Center provides resources for you to improve and optimize your wellbeing. The tips and ideas in this guide are things you’ll be able to do on your own right now in the comfort of your own space. We also offer many academic courses, free community classes, and even a graduate degree and certificates.

We illustrate the concept of wellbeing through our Wellbeing Model – this includes six areas of wellbeing, each of which feature many sub-sections. The dimensions are health, purpose, relationships, community, security and environment.

If you’d like to explore wellbeing and earn academic credits, we encourage you to check out our for-credit courses – many of these can meet your departmental or elective requirements. Visit z.umn.edu/CSHcourses or search for the CSPH course designator in OneStop when you’re planning your schedule.
Health

Health is affected by the food we eat, how often we exercise, how we manage our stress, and how much we sleep, as well as social, environmental, and genetic influences.

When you experience excessive stress or do not manage school and workloads effectively, your health is compromised. Strength in this area includes the ability to make healthy choices, maintain a healthy attitude, and experience resilience as you bounce back from setbacks or disappointments.

Don’t forget that it’s also important to reach out proactively when you need help and support. Visit mentalhealth.umn.edu to make an appointment with Boynton Health or Student Counseling Services, or call 612-301-4673 if you’re having an after hours crisis. You may also text “UMN” to 61222 evenings and weekends.

Assess Your Health, and Explore More Tips and Suggestions

Visit z.umn.edu/WBHealth to do a short, free wellbeing assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your health and wellbeing.
**4-7-8 Breath**

The 4-7-8 breathing exercise for relaxation is simple, takes almost no time, requires no equipment and can be done anywhere.

Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise. You will be exhaling through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward.

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

With this breathing technique, you always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth. The tip of your tongue stays in position the whole time. Exhalation takes twice as long as inhalation. The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

For more tips on breathe to relax, visit: takingcharge.csh.umn.edu
What Do Experts Recommend for Healthy Sleep?

EXPERTS GENERALLY AGREE that adults need 7-9 hours of sleep each night; too much or too little can have negative health consequences. As you begin to pay more attention to your own sleep patterns, you will see how different aspects of your life affect and are affected by sleep.

To get 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night, experts recommend that you:

- **Honor your body's need for sleep.**
  Don't trade a few hours of productivity/wakefulness for sleep. If you feel as though you don't have enough time to accomplish everything, see what else you can cut out—watching television in the evening, for example—and make sleep a non-negotiable priority.

- **Create a sleep routine.**
  Having a ritual every night before bed can help to remind the body that it's time to sleep and lull the mind into a restful state. Harvard's Healthy Sleep program recommends making your nighttime routine as stress-free as possible—take a hot bath, meditate, or read a good book before turning out the lights. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends.

- **Avoid stimulants late in the day.**
  Resist that cup of coffee at 3:00 in the afternoon, no matter how tempting it may be. Caffeine affects everyone differently, but you can generally expect its effects to last 6-8 hours after consumption. Even if you fall asleep easily at night, the leftover effects can disrupt your sleep cycle, making you even sleepier the next day (which may cause you to consume more caffeine!).

- **Nurture relationships with loved ones.**
  Research shows that troubled relationships can disrupt sleep. Make cultivating healthy connections with your family and loved ones a priority, practicing deep listening, gratitude, and good communication skills.

- **Stay active during the day.**
  Regular exercise improves sleep and can help with sleep disorders such as insomnia and restless legs syndrome (RLS). Tai chi and yoga may have particularly powerful benefits if you are having trouble sleeping— they offer physical exercise and create a sense of relaxation that facilitates sleep.

For more information on how you can achieve healthier sleep, visit: [z.umn.edu/HealthierSleep](z.umn.edu/HealthierSleep)
Take Charge of Your Sleep.

There are many steps you can take to return to a more regular sleep schedule:

1. IMPROVE SLEEP HYGIENE.
The first and most important step you can take in overcoming insomnia is to develop healthy sleep habits. Creating a comfortable sleeping environment free from distractions (i.e., no television, large clocks, or laptops in the bedroom) is key in finding more consistent sleep. If you find yourself lying in bed wide awake for more than 20 minutes, get up. Read a few pages of a book, drink warm milk, or meditate until you feel sleepy enough to get back into bed.

2. MAKE SOME CHANGES IN YOUR DAILY LIFESTYLE.
If you suffer from insomnia, what you do during the day can be just as important as what you do when you lie down at night. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine, which can disrupt sleep even in non-insomniacs. Make sure you get enough exercise each day and eat healthy foods, but avoid vigorous movement, heavy meals, and spicy foods 2-3 hours before bedtime. If you're tired during the day because you can't sleep at night, try to avoid napping, except for "emergency naps" before driving or operating heavy machinery. If you can, save your tiredness for when it's time to go to bed. If you lie awake at night with your mind buzzing with work, make a to-do list before bed and set it aside, knowing that you can take care of everything tomorrow.

3. DO YOGA OR TAI CHI.
Doing yoga or tai chi on a daily basis can help you reduce feelings of stress, fall asleep faster, and stay asleep longer.

4. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS MEDITATION.
Research shows that mindfulness-based meditation can have a positive effect on sleep in as little as 8 weeks of practice. Mediation lowers cortisol levels (a stress hormone) and facilitates a more relaxed and accepting state of being. This can help tremendously if you find yourself unable to sleep because you are worried or stressed.

5. TRY RELAXATION TECHNIQUES.
Because insomnia is often connected to stress, basic relaxation techniques can help you calm your mind and body so that you can rest. Deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery (imagining peaceful, relaxing places) are all effective ways of gently guiding your body into a relaxed state. Taking 20 minutes for a relaxation practice before going to bed can also ease anxiety.

6. TAKE HERBAL AND DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS.
There are several options for non-pharmaceutical treatments for insomnia. Be sure to tell your healthcare practitioner about any herbs or supplements you use on your own.
   a. VALERIAN is a popular botanical herb that has long been used for its sedative effects. While many people use valerian to help them fall asleep and some clinical trials have shown it to be helpful for the treatment of insomnia, larger reviews indicate that more trials are needed to conclusively prove its efficacy. (All studies agree, however, that valerian is safe to use for short 4-6 week periods at a time).
   b. MELATONIN is a natural hormone that regulates sleep and can also be taken as a supplement. Many people prefer melatonin to prescribed sleeping medications because it does not have a next-day “hangover” effect and is not addictive. Like valerian, much of melatonin’s effectiveness is anecdotal and based on small research studies. A 2013 meta-analysis demonstrated that melatonin increases total sleep time with overall improvement in sleep quality. The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database has found that melatonin’s is possibly effective for insomnia, but larger, more quantifiable studies are needed.
   c. CHAMOMILE can be taken as a bedtime tea. Though many report feelings of relaxation that are induced by chamomile, scientific evidence of its efficacy has not been proven.

7. USE AROMATHERAPY.
Many people use lavender to help induce a state of relaxation, and research suggests that the inhalation of lavender essential oils can have a positive impact on sleep quality and mood. There are a number of ways you can use lavender—get a massage with lavender oil, inhale a few drops on a cotton ball, or use a diffuser.

8. VISIT AN INTEGRATIVE PRACTITIONER.
Many clinical trials and personal case studies have reported the benefits that acupuncture, acupressure, massage, and reflexology can have on sleep. Larger reviews indicate that there is a need for more standardized research in these areas, but these practices are safe to try and are not likely to have any side effects.

9. SEE A THERAPIST.
Cognitive behavioral therapy has also been found to be an effective form of treating insomnia.

If you are having trouble sleeping, you should first take into consideration if there are any changes in your life—such as starting school, high levels of stress, or medications—that might be affecting your sleep. Visit your healthcare provider to talk about your symptoms and get a physical examination to rule out or seek treatment for any underlying health conditions that may be causing your sleeping problems. z.umn.edu/HealthierSleep
What Do Experts Recommend for Healthy Eating?

Large portion sizes, processed foods, refined carbohydrates, and saturated fats—these are the deadly components of the Standard American Diet (S.A.D.), which has caused obesity rates to skyrocket in both adults and children.

Making healthy food choices and practicing mindful eating can help you provide your body with the nutrients it needs to achieve optimum wellbeing and lower your risk for diseases like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems, and certain cancers.

Combine healthy eating with exercise.

Studies show that diet alone is not as effective in achieving a healthy body weight as diet combined with exercise. Physical activity has many other health benefits as well. Even relatively small weight loss can make a difference in health by reducing blood pressure and improving glucose tolerance and blood lipids.

Follow dietary guidelines.

Whether you are working to lose or maintain weight, you should make healthy food choices following the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These guidelines will improve your health, help you meet your nutrient requirements, and reduce your risk of chronic disease.

Drink Water.

Your water needs depend on many factors, including your health, how active you are, and where you live. It’s generally not a good idea to use thirst alone as a guide for when to drink. By the time you become thirsty, you may already be slightly dehydrated. It is especially important for older adults to drink water before becoming thirsty, because your thirst sense is diminished as you get older.

Pay attention to your eating patterns.

How, when, and where do you eat? If you’re like many Americans, you may often eat meals while doing something else: driving, talking on the phone, watching television, or reading. In short, you may pay little attention to your food.

Avoid the influence of the “Food Giants.”

In Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us, reporter Michael Moss describes how executives at large food corporations have figured out the science of getting people to buy more of their products. In short, many processed foods are not designed to enhance wellbeing, but to exploit natural cravings for salt, sugar, and fat.

visit z.umn.edu/HealthyEating for more information
More about the Dietary Guidelines and Your Health

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 are slightly different from previous versions, as they focus on eating patterns rather than individual dietary components. Overall, the main recommendation is to follow a healthy eating pattern that incorporates a variety of nutrient-dense foods and beverages.

1. USE PLANT FOODS AS THE FOUNDATION OF MEALS.
Most of the calories in your diet should come from a variety of whole-grain products, vegetables, and fruits. Plant foods provide a variety of vitamins and minerals essential for health, and most are naturally low in fat.

The Guidelines recommend incorporating all the vegetable subgroups—dark green, red and orange, legumes (such as beans and peas), and starchy—into your eating patterns. (You can have some of each throughout the week, for example.)

Plant foods—such as whole-grain breads and cereals, vegetables, and fruits—provide fiber, which is important for proper bowel function and may lower the risk for heart disease and some cancers. Because there are different types of fiber in foods, choose a variety of foods daily. You want whole grains to make up at least half of your overall grain intake.

2. GET ENOUGH CALCIUM-RICH FOODS.
Consume some low-fat or fat-free milk or an equivalent amount of calcium each day through other calcium rich foods or a dietary supplement. Soy beverages that are fortified with calcium (like soy milk) are considered equivalent to milk in nutritional and calcium content, but other plant-based “milks” (almond, rice, coconut, hemp) are not.

Note: There is some controversy about the amount of dairy you should consume each day. The Dietary Guidelines recommend 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk or equivalent dairy each day for adults. The Harvard School of Public Health recommends only one to two servings per day and argues that there is little, if any, evidence that high dairy intakes protect against osteoporosis, while high intakes are associated with increased risk of prostate cancer and possibly ovarian cancer.

3. KEEP SATURATED AND TRANS FATS LOW.
Saturated fat and trans fatty acids raise blood cholesterol more than other forms of fat. Keep saturated fats to less than 10 percent of calories and keep trans fatty acids as low as possible. The fats from meat, milk, and milk products are the main sources of saturated fats in most diets, so select lean meats, poultry, fish, and low-fat milk products. (The Advisory Committee behind the guidelines specifically recommends reducing consumption of red and processed meats to help prevent chronic diseases.) Many bakery products are also sources of saturated fats and trans fatty acids, such as palm oil and partially hydrogenated oils.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend shifting from solid fats to oils in food preparation (for example, using vegetable oil instead of butter in cooking).

4. RESTRICT SUGAR AND SALT.
The best way to avoid unwanted sugar, salt, and other additives is to prepare whole food from scratch as much as possible. This gives you total control not only over the flavor and quality of your food, but also over any unwanted ingredients hidden through processing. The naturally occurring sugars, salts, and fats in our food are important components of a healthy diet and are not to be mistaken for the multitude of artificial sugars, salts, and fats commonly added to foods.

Because maintaining a nutritious diet and a healthy weight is very important, sugars should be used in moderation. People with low-calorie needs should limit sugar intake even more. The Dietary Guidelines recommend that you consume less than 10% of your daily calories from added sugars.

Many studies in diverse populations have shown that a high sodium intake is associated with higher blood pressure. Most evidence suggests that many people at risk for high blood pressure reduce their chances of developing this condition by consuming less salt or sodium. The Dietary Guidelines recommend keeping sodium intake below 2,300 mg/day.

5. EAT MODERATE PORTIONS.
Pay particular attention to portion sizes—the portions in restaurants and on food labels are often far larger than recommended for weight management. Be especially careful to limit portion sizes of foods high in calories, such as baked goods, French fries, and fats and oils.

6. USE ALCOHOL IN MODERATION.
Alcohol provides empty calories and is harmful when consumed in excess. Some people should not drink at all, such as children and adolescents, pregnant women, those with liver or other diseases, those taking certain medications that interact with alcohol, and those who can’t restrict their drinking. Moderation is defined as one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. (One drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of hard liquor)

If you are having trouble with your diet, you should first take into consideration if there are any changes in your life—such as starting school, high levels of stress, or medications—that might be affecting your health. Visit your healthcare provider to talk about your symptoms and get a physical examination to rule out or seek treatment for any underlying health conditions that may be causing your problems. z.umn.edu/HealthyEating
In her book *Positivity*, Barbara Fredrickson offers five specific tips to help increase positive emotions:

- Practice Gratitude
- Be Kind
- Connect With Others
- Spend Time in Nature
- Savor Goodness

To explore these ideas in more depth, visit z.umn.edu/IncreasePositivity
One easy way to soothe and comfort yourself when you’re feeling badly is to give yourself a gentle hug or caress, or simply put your hand on your heart and feel the warmth of your hand. It may feel awkward or embarrassing at first, but your body doesn’t know that. It just responds to the physical gesture of warmth and care, just as a baby responds to being cuddled in its mother’s arms. Our skin is an incredibly sensitive organ. Research indicates that physical touch releases oxytocin, provides a sense of security, soothes distressing emotions, and calms cardiovascular stress.

So why not try it?

You might like to try putting your hand over your heart during difficult periods several times a day for a period of at least a week.

HAND ON HEART

- When you notice you’re under stress, take 2-3 deep, satisfying breaths.
- Gently place your hand over your heart, feeling the gentle pressure and warmth of your hand. If you wish, place both hands on your chest, noticing the difference between one and two hands.
- Feel the touch of your hand on your chest. If you wish, you could make small circles with your hand on your chest.
- Feel the natural rising and falling of your chest as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Linger with the feeling for as long as you like.

Some people feel uneasy putting a hand over the heart. Feel free to explore where on your body a gentle touch is actually soothing. Some other possibilities:

- One hand on your cheek
- Cradling your face in your hands
- Gently stroking your arms
- Crossing your arms and giving a gentle squeeze
- Hand on your abdomen
- One hand on your abdomen and one over heart
- Cupping one hand in the other in your lap
- Gently rubbing your chest, or using circular movements

You may add caring words, phrases or a prayer to gently whisper to yourself - comforting yourself, as you would a dear friend experiencing a challenging time.

Hopefully you’ll start to develop the habit of physically comforting yourself when needed, taking full advantage of this surprisingly simple and straightforward way to be kind to ourselves.
Purpose

Your wellbeing is enhanced through a sense of knowing who you are, and what you are here to do. This understanding grows through all the activities that you participate in (academic courses, volunteering, work, religious and cultural activities, student groups, internships, study abroad, events/activities, etc.) Developing strength in this area will help you understand your personal guiding values, beliefs, strengths, and passions. You’ll also be able to identify central aspects of a purposeful life, and have a sense of hope, purpose, and self-efficacy in your university career and beyond.

Assess Your Purpose, and Explore More
Tips and Suggestions

Visit z.umn.edu/WBPurpose to do a short, free wellbeing assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your purpose and wellbeing.
TO EXPLORE YOUR PURPOSE:

- Question yourself regularly about purpose
- Use the answers to find your unique way to contribute
- Don't ignore your spirituality—it can be a source of purpose
- Take the next step—move to action
Life Spiral Exercise

At the bottom of the spiral, write your date of birth. At the top, write the age you think you will live to be. Mark the place on the spiral which represents your current age. How far along are you in this life? What feelings does this evoke?

Record three trigger experiences that shaped your life story. These could be any major life events, breakthroughs or breakdowns, such as beginning or ending relationships, moves, losses, job changes, etc. Write down the age each trigger took place. What was the life lesson learned in each case?

Focus on each of these life lessons—what did they teach you, and how did they change you? Can you gauge from this exercise where you are in your life today and where you’d like to be by the end of it? What would a life well lived look like? Seeing your life in this broader perspective can help identify what is meaningful and valuable to you.
A CALLING:

**UTILIZES YOUR NATURAL GIFTS.** We each possess hundreds of skills, and nearly all of us also have some natural gifts, which often emerge early in our lives. Gifts are more than just talents; they are what make you feel fulfilled and happy. Having a sense of humor or an ability to bring joy to others, an ability to quickly compute numbers, or an aptitude for leading others are examples of natural gifts that can express your purpose.

**SERVES OTHERS.** Your calling can be thought of as the urge to share your gifts with the world. When you express your gifts for the sake of others, you often experience the joy of being fully alive.

**creates “flow.”** What were you doing the last time you experienced such absorption that you lost all sense of time? You were probably doing something that relates to your calling.

Visit our Taking Charge site to discover your passions, try free-flow journaling, and explore purpose even more. z.umn.edu/wbpurpose
Relationships

Relationships are about authentic connections, respect for self and others, the ability to relate across multiple types of differences, the skills to connect effectively in-person and in online environments, and sustaining connections that are supportive and nurturing (including parents, friends, pets, and significant others).

When you have strength in this dimension, you are able to navigate many kinds of relationships smoothly. You’re accepting of others, non-judgmental, and seek out relationships that allow them to learn and grow in new ways. You know when to collaborate and seek help from others rather than act on your own, and have a close group of friends (even if small in number!)

Assess Your Relationships, and Explore More Tips and Suggestions

Visit [z.umn.edu/WBRelationships](http://z.umn.edu/WBRelationships) to do a short, free assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your relationships and wellbeing.
Develop Your Relationship Skills

- Practice Gratitude
- Learn to Forgive
- Be Compassionate
- Accept Others
- Create Rituals Together
- Balance Social and Alone Time
8 Tips to be More Grateful

- Every night, reflect on 3 good things from your day, if you'd like, you can record them in a gratitude journal.
- Thank those important in your life to let them know you appreciate them.
- Lighten a stormy mood with a gratitude inventory. Start with listing 5 things you're thankful for in the moment.
- Thank yourself for your healthy habits.
- Send out some good vibes to friends on social media and let them know you are thankful for them.
- Stop and notice the beauty and good in your surroundings. Pay attention to them, so you can remember this moment later.
- Look for silver linings even in difficult situations.
- Look outward. Empathy for others can trigger a sense of gratitude.

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Community

Community reflects a sense of belonging to a neighborhood, dorm, service group, college, major, student group, or group of peers on campus. When this area is strong, you’ll be inclined to join organizations or initiatives, spend time in group activities, and feel supported by various group connections on campus.

Systemic racism is a significant barrier to the wellbeing of a community. Today, many people are just now waking up to the reality of racial inequity in America - a reality that has long been the lived experience of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. While people may feel moved to do something, we may also feel helpless: How can we help fix a systemic problem that is so complex and pervasive? Rhonda Magee, a law professor, mindfulness teacher, and social justice advocate believes that we can start by cultivating mindfulness - what she calls “The Inner Work of Racial Justice.” Read our interview with Professor Magee, which includes tips and strategies to help you begin this critical work, at z.umn.edu/CSHracialjustice

Assess Your Community Connections, and Explore More Tips and Suggestions

Visit z.umn.edu/WBCommunity to do a short, free assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your community and wellbeing.
Using Mindfulness for Racial Justice

Rhonda Magee, a law professor and mindfulness teacher and the author of “The Inner Work of Racial Justice: Healing Ourselves and Transforming Our Communities” says that “Mindfulness deepens our ability to notice very subtle aspects of our lived experience and to be present with those aspects. It also provides an ethical lens to help us understand how the ways we engage impact our interpersonal relationships and actions in the world.”

Mindfulness practice can bring about transformation on three levels: personal, interpersonal, and collective. We must first clearly see our own biases in action, and how they harm others, and then work with compassion to bring justice into the world.

Magee emphasizes the importance of grounding within your physical experience as a way of connecting to the present moment. When you see a news story about police brutality against a person of color, or find yourself in a conversation about race, pay attention to your moment-to-moment experience.

Do you tense up?
What does it feel like in your body?
Do you change the channel or shift topics?
What do you assume you know about the issue?
Do you become defensive?

Don’t judge your experience; the practice is to simply become familiar with what is happening within you.

Remember to be compassionate to yourself—you are learning and changing, which can be difficult. “Self-compassion sustains us as we do the painful work of seeing ourselves and our circumstances rightly,” says Magee. “This is the first step in personal healing and societal transformation.”
What is community wellbeing?

Community wellbeing is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfill their potential.¹

When we look at community as a whole, we find three attributes that play a large role in wellbeing: connectedness, livability, and equity. We can explore each of these attributes for factors that contribute to community wellbeing.

Connectedness
- Social support
- Civic engagement
- Community participation

Equity
- All members are treated with fairness and justice
- Basic needs are met
- Equal opportunity

Livability
- Housing, Transportation, Education, Parks and recreation, Human services, Public safety, Access to culture and the arts

¹ Wiseman and Brasher, 2008.
Security

Security and Safety reflects a sense of security on campus, in the classroom, and physical, mental, and emotional safety in all relationships. It also includes a sense of financial stability. When you have strength in this dimension, you’ll attend classes and other university activities with confidence and ease. You’ll also use campus security services when needed, and likely feel respected and safe in classes, in residence halls, and in conversations with university professors and staff.

Assess Your Safety and Security, and Explore More Tips and Suggestions

Visit z.umn.edu/WBSecurity to do a short, free assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your security and wellbeing.
Making Wise Choices

Much of safety comes from our own lifestyle choices, including if and how we choose to use alcohol, our sexual choices, and the ways we engage with technology. Here are some tips to decrease your risks.

Use alcohol moderately

Alcohol slows the brain’s ability to control the body and mind. It acts like a sedative and slows down muscle coordination, reflexes, movement, and speech. If you drink too much alcohol, your breathing or heart rate can reach dangerously low levels or even stop.

If you are of legal drinking age, remember that it is your choice whether to use alcohol or not. No one should feel pressured to drink or made to feel embarrassed because of a personal choice. Drinking alcohol should not be seen as a necessary component for having fun and being with friends. If you do choose to use alcohol, do so in moderation and know your personal limits.

If you are concerned that you might have a drinking problem, visit the U’s Student Mental Health site at: http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/alcohol/index.html
PRACTICE HEALTHY AND SAFE SEX

The Aurora Center for Advocacy & Education provides a free and confidential space for students, faculty, and staff affiliated with the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities and Augsburg University who are victims/survivors/concerned people of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment. Visit aurora.umn.edu

STAY INFORMED

Safety is a key part of healthy sex, including protecting yourself and your partner from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Stay informed about the latest information on disease prevention and birth control by reading materials from the local health department or reputable health education websites. Don’t hesitate to talk to your provider as well.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

One way to look at healthy sex is “CERTS,” which stands for:

- **Consent**: You can freely and comfortably choose whether or not to engage in sexual activity, and you are able to stop the activity at any time.
- **Equality**: Your sense of personal power is on an equal level with your partner.
- **Respect**: You have positive regard for yourself and for your partner, and you have mutual respect.
- **Trust**: You trust your partner on both a physical and emotional level.
- **Safety**: You feel secure, safe, and comfortable with where, when, and how the sexual activity takes place. You feel safe from the possibility of harm, such as unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection, and physical injury.

Boynton Health promotes inclusive, medically-accurate, and comprehensive sexual health education. We also provide access to safer-sex supplies so students can make the best sexual health decisions for themselves. [https://boynton.umn.edu/safersex101](https://boynton.umn.edu/safersex101)
How to Deal with Fear and Anxiety

Avoid avoidance
Develop a healthy sense of personal control
Promote positivity
Find meaning
Get support
Go for a walk in nature

Face your fears and anxieties so they don’t become debilitating. Identify ways to create a sense of personal control or mastery in your life.

If you are concerned that you might have a problem, visit the U’s Student Mental Health site at: http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/alcohol/index.html

To explore these ideas in more depth, visit z.umn.edu/Fear
Environment

Environment is focused on a welcoming campus and neighborhood, access to adequate housing, places for reflection and contemplation, and access to nature. When this dimension is strong, you feel welcomed and accepted as part of the campus community. You have the physical resources (transportation, housing, food, technology, academic resources) to be successful academically; and you feel connected to both yourself and nature.

Assess the Connection Between Nature and Wellbeing, and Explore More Tips and Suggestions

Visit [z.umn.edu/WBEnvironment](z.umn.edu/WBEnvironment) to do a short, free assessment. After you’ve completed the assessment, you’ll have the opportunity to set goals to improve your environment and wellbeing.
Many people know that exercise improves health and wellbeing. But did you know that there's a growing body of research which suggests that exercising outside is more effective than exercising inside? Go outside!

Green Exercise - which is simply activity in the presence of nature - has been found to benefit emotional wellbeing by improving attention and reducing stress.

Get motivated! Green Exercise may help you become excited about physical activity by offering you a break from your busy life.

Go green. Some evidence suggests that exercise may feel easier when performed outside, and that even being in the presence of the color green while exercising will positively affect your mood.
10 Things You Can Do for Planetary Health

Below are ten solutions suggested by Project Drawdown, an organization that reviews and distills climate research into practical solutions. For tips on how you can take action and even more ideas, join Drawdown's Ecochallenge and find measurable actions you can take to reduce global warming. Still want to learn more? Visit Drawdown.org, the world's leading resource for climate solutions, to explore changes you can make right now.

**Our tip:** After visiting Drawdown.org, pick one or two solutions from the categories below that look interesting and manageable to you. Pay attention to when you're feeling overwhelmed. That's a good sign that you might want to relax, take a deep breath, and focus on what feels most meaningful in the moment.

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Mindfulness

While mindfulness is not a separate aspect of our wellbeing model, it is an essential part of it all. It lets us pay attention to our health, relationships, and environment. It helps us discover our purpose and path to security. It builds community.

The Center offers many courses on mindfulness – search for course designator CSPH when you plan your schedules. And join us for our weekly, free, online Mindful Mondays drop in – you’ll learn about mindfulness, mindful movement like yoga, and more! z.umn.edu/MindfulMondays
When you notice something has triggered you and you are about to react:

STOP

Slow down
Take a breath
Observe
Proceed

What are you feeling in your body?
What are you thinking? What other possibilities exist?
Considering multiple possibilities

VISIT www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/ for more tips on mindfulness, wellbeing, and more
Try a classic sitting meditation.

- Sit comfortably
- Begin with intention
- Bring attention to the body
- Pay attention to breath
- Notice when attention wanders and gently come back to the breath

Sometimes it's best to take a break and try again later.

Remember that mindfulness is about developing a steady and balanced mind and heart that can be present with whatever situation or experience arises.
Try a short mindfulness exercise

Touch your index finger and thumb together.


Now explore your index finger with your thumb. Is it the same? Rougher? Smoother? Hotter? Cooler? Drier? Other memories or thoughts?
Student Resources

Our Taking Charge website has a new student corner that features articles such as Facing Fomo, Addressing Imposter Syndrome, COVID-19 Uncertainty and Isolation, Seasonal Affective Disorder, and more.

Visit z.umn.edu/WellbeingStudentCorner to read these articles and discover important coping and stress management strategies.
Get enough sleep
Sure, the beginning of the semester is buzzing with excitement, but trust us: everyone regrets pulling all-nighters. Make sure you get between 6 and 8 hours of sleep each night to keep your mood, concentration, energy, and stress levels in check. (Pro tip: For optimal rest, steer clear of electronic screens for a couple of hours before bed.)

Stock your fridge
Every fridge should always contain: a fruit, a vegetable, and a source of calcium (such as cheese, beans, milk, or calcium-fortified soy milk). Nutrient-rich foods you can grab on your way to class, such as apples or yogurt, will help keep you feeling satisfied and less likely to reach for salty or sugary snacks, which can zap your energy and leave you feeling lethargic.

Buy a plant
Adding some green to your room can improve your mood, decrease stress and anxiety, and even help you focus on your homework. Try a spider plant or cactus—they tolerate dorm life especially well.

Say hi to your neighbor
Help develop a sense of community on campus by greeting others with a smile. Our behavior is “contagious”—your kindness will spread, contributing to a friendlier, more trusting community.

Make time for fun
An hour of leisure activity that brings pleasure (think concerts, Frisbee, or even video games) can be a great source of relaxation, as well as a boost to your problem-solving skills and creativity. Just make sure the activity fits harmoniously into your life and doesn’t create stress or interfere with your relationships or obligations.

Schedule time to de-stress
Don’t wait until you feel overwhelmed to try and manage stress—make time now for things that you know will keep you calm. Plan ahead to use free campus resources, like free meditation (Stress Busters) and hanging out with therapy animals (PAWS).

Connect to something bigger
Connecting to the “big picture” in whatever way feels meaningful for you—volunteer work, attending religious services, sitting in front of a painting at the Weisman, or taking a mindful stroll along the river—is a beautiful way to untangle yourself from the stress that arises during a busy academic life.
Online Wellbeing Opportunities for UMN Students

Mindful Mondays

Mondays, noon - 1:00 pm
Refresh and recharge yourself with an informal hour of meditation and light movement. Our experienced instructors will guide you through exercises that will leave you feeling physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually rejuvenated. No prior experience or special clothes necessary.
Learn more: z.umn.edu/stressbusters

Wellbeing Series

Since 2012, the University of Minnesota’s Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing has hosted wellbeing thought-leaders to inspire and educate the community, organizations, and life-long learners through the Wellbeing Lecture Series. Discover more about your own wellbeing with us through the Wellbeing Series, an opportunity to engage, learn, and experience what wellbeing means to you.
Learn more: z.umn.edu/wellbeingseries

Free Webinars

We offer monthly webinars on a variety of topics, including food and wellbeing, navigating change, resilience, mindfulness, leadership, healthier sleep, and more! These webinars are led by Center experts, and are designed to help you take charge of your health and wellbeing. View upcoming webinars and watch videos from past webinars at z.umn.edu/wellbeingwebinars

Taking Charge of Your Health & Wellbeing

Brought to you by the University’s Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing, Taking Charge of Your Health & Wellbeing is a website that provides information about enhancing wellbeing, exploring complementary and integrative healing practices, and navigating the healthcare system. Visit takingcharge.csh.umn.edu to check out tips, videos, and take interactive assessments.

Academic Courses

The Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing offers nearly 40 courses each semester that focus on wellbeing, self-care, and integrative health and healing. Learn more about in-person, online, and hybrid courses at z.umn.edu/CSHcourses
Study Integrative Healing and Wellbeing

**COURSE INDEX**

Earn academic credit with the Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing.
Courses vary both in semesters offered and mode of instruction.

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Earn academic credits and become a Hatha yoga instructor! The Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing offers a series of three academic courses to prepare students to teach Hatha Yoga: CSPH 4311, 4312, and 4313. Students who successfully complete these courses are eligible to register with Yoga Alliance as a 200 hour Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT).

Learn more at z.umn.edu/HathaYoga
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