

BELLIN FOR WOMEN

ESSENTIALS FOR HEALTH

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Welcome to Essentials for Health—the monthly newsletter of Bellin For Women. You want to take a more active role in your own health, and this is just one of the ways we like to help. This newsletter is your go-to for all kinds of health-related information, from wellness education to health topics in the news to recipes that are good for you and yet somehow taste good, too.

But it's more than that. It's also your connection to BFW. Bellin For Women is a true community of women working to support each other, and maybe even have some fun, on our path to better health. Essentials for Health puts all that energy in your inbox every month to keep you encouraged and motivated to make every day happier and healthier.





JUGGLE WITHOUT THE STRUGGLE

How do I find work/life balance?

Does the pursuit of a healthy work/life balance seem like an impossible goal? If so, you're not alone. With the blurring of lines between career and lack of "down time," many of us feel torn between juggling long work days, relationships, caring for our parents and children, and fitting in exercise or hobbies. According to a recent Gallup poll, 80% of Americans said they experience stress in their daily lives, and they report that children and work are their biggest stressors.

Stress Effects

Stress can:

- Diminish our concentration
- Make us irritable
- Cause depression
- Affect our relationships
- Deplete our energy
- Impact our sleep

Over time, stress can also contribute to health issues, including:

- High blood pressure
- Asthma
- Ulcers
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Headaches
- Back pain

While we all require some stress to help us perform at our best, the secret to managing stress is to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Here are a few tips to ease stress and gain balance in our lives.

In the Workplace

Set achievable goals each day. Being able to check things off our “to do” list helps us feel in control, and gives us a sense of accomplishment. Be sure to ask for help when necessary.

Make the best use of your time. Evaluate when and if it is necessary for you to spend time doing “busy work.” The less time you spend doing unnecessary work, the more time you can spend productively with your family.

Request flexibility. Flex time and telecommuting are becoming necessities in today’s business world, and many companies now incorporate flexible schedules and encourage telecommuting to maximize productivity.

Give yourself a break. Taking small breaks clears your head and improves your ability to deal with stress.

Speak up. If you are overwhelmed, be honest with your boss and coworkers and ask for help. Offer solutions and be open to ideas on how to achieve a solution.

At Home

Unplug. Make yourself available to your employer, especially if you’ve earned the right to flextime, but realize the need for personal time.

Set family time as a goal. Setting aside a specific amount of focused together time can ease the stress you may feel when you don’t allocate your off-work time well. Fun outings like an easy hike through a local park can be time-efficient bonding, better than hours spent disconnected from one another in front of the TV or in separate areas of the house.

Don’t overcommit. If you’re overcommitted with activities, learn to say, “no.”

Divide and conquer. Make sure chores and responsibilities at home are clearly outlined and distributed so you aren’t shouldering the burden of home tasks alone.

Be active. Regular exercise reduces stress, depression and anxiety.

Stay healthy. Be sure to eat right, exercise, and get enough sleep. Be careful not to rely on drugs and alcohol. If you feel you are suffering from substance abuse, seek help.

Assign tasks to share the joy. Try incorporating family time into everyday tasks like meal preparation that have to be done anyway. Give everyone a job at dinner rather than trading off days, so you’re all in the kitchen together on family meal nights. It may not be the most efficient way to get things done, but you’ll all be in it together.

3 WAYS TO GET MORE FAMILY TIME

1. Prioritize your to-do list, eliminating anything that’s not a “must.”
2. Set aside a few minutes of “me time” every day to re-energize yourself.
3. Exercise and eat a healthy diet to keep up your energy level.

Nutrition

Nutrition does not have to suffer or cause stress as our schedules get busier in the Fall. Convenience options have a bad reputation, but they do not have to!

Dining out can be a healthy option. Choosing menu items with “grilled,” “roasted,” or “steamed” in the name tends to lead to lower-fat, lower-calorie options. Many restaurants also provide larger portion sizes, and you can save half the entrée for another meal. You may also consider choosing a fruit or vegetable as a side when able for a more balanced meal. When picking up pre-made foods at the grocery store, look for reduced-sodium frozen or boxed foods and add a fruit or vegetable. Additionally, delis often have pre-made sandwiches, salads, and prepared fruit and vegetable trays.

When cooking at home, you may plan meals ahead of time to help you keep on track as the week gets busier. Keeping staples on hand can reduce stress by allowing you to only worry about the main course. Frozen and canned vegetables are preserved at the peak of freshness, which means they are loaded with nutrients and do not spoil quickly. Rice or pasta can be purchased in large quantities, contain loads of nutrients, and cook up fast. Whole-grain breads and tortillas do not require cooking in advance and can be a quick addition to a meal. When planning a meal, think a vegetable, starch, and protein. Also, planning meals with similar ingredients allows you to batch cook some foods. For example, you can cook a large roast or whole chicken (or grab a rotisserie chicken from the deli) and serve throughout the week in sandwiches, wraps, salads, quesadillas or tacos, etc. so you do not need to cook every night. You may also cook large batches of vegetables and grains to use throughout the week. Cooked vegetables, grains, and protein can be stored in the fridge for three to four days or up to two months in the freezer.

https://www.bellin.org/services_programs/weight-management

ACTION ITEMS

Don’t let stress stand in the way of your health and happiness. If you are persistently stressed and have trouble achieving balance between home and work, talk to your healthcare provider about seeking help from a mental health professional.

► FOR MORE INFORMATION go to https://www.bellin.org/services_programs/mental-well-being

OWN IT!

Take charge of your health

No one has more control over your health than you do. When you make your health a priority, you feel a greater sense of control and are more comfortable making healthcare decisions.

Here are a few tips on how you can stay well by taking action to own your own health.

WORK AS A TEAM WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER.

Unlike specialists, who focus on treating specific diseases, your primary care provider works to keep you healthy over your entire life. You know your body and your needs, concerns, and healthcare wishes. Your provider has medical expertise. Together, as a team, you can focus on staying healthy and preventing disease.

BE AN EDUCATED HEALTHCARE CONSUMER.

If you've been diagnosed with a health problem, learn as much as you are able to about your condition and the treatment options before you make any important decisions. Consider participating in disease-specific support groups or online forums where you can learn from others who have similar concerns and challenges.

ASK QUESTIONS.

Time with your provider is limited so make the best of it. Prepare a list of questions before each appointment. There is no such thing as a stupid question. If you don't understand something, keep asking until you do understand. It helps to ask open-ended questions. Instead of "Do I need this treatment?" ask, "If I decide not to accept this treatment, what will happen to me?" or, "Are there other treatments, and if so, can you tell me about them?"

KEEP UP WITH APPROPRIATE WELLNESS VISITS AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES.

Ask your provider which screenings and immunizations are right for you based on your age and risk factors.

GET HEALTHY.

Did you know that seven out of 10 deaths are due to chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes? These conditions are largely preventable with a healthy lifestyle. Eat right, maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, and don't smoke. These are proven strategies for reducing your risk of disease. Your healthcare provider can help you develop and implement a 'Get Healthy' plan.

SEEK A SECOND OPINION.

One out of 20 Americans is a victim of outpatient diagnostic errors, according to the Association for Healthcare and Research Quality. Don't be afraid to seek another opinion before undergoing surgery or beginning treatment for a serious medical problem.



ACTION ITEMS

Being a good advocate for yourself is important when you are facing a serious illness, but don't wait until you are sick to advocate for yourself. Your everyday decisions affect your long-term health, so start looking out for your future health now. Start by visiting your doctor to discuss your health goals.

► FOR MORE INFORMATION go to https://www.bellin.org/services_programs/primary-care

FINDING LIFE BALANCE

By Kara Wilkens MA, LPC

Bellin Health Psychiatric Center - Ashwaubenon



A good life balance can contribute to stress reduction, clear headedness, improvement in overall health, and a feeling of satisfaction. You may desire better balance in your life, but start with asking yourself what life balance means to you. Other questions to ask yourself include; how would you know if your life was out of balance, what might be causing the imbalance, and what could you do about it.

If you try to live your life based on what someone else defines as a balanced life, there is no guarantee that it will feel that way to you. According to some experts, overall life balance includes eight dimensions of wellness; emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial, occupational, and social, so this might be a helpful outline to start with. Another way to define life balance is just to think about what is important to you including; getting basic needs met, connecting with others, enjoying life, and the value of stability, structure, and predictability in your life.

Work, school, family, and leisure are things people commonly struggle with balancing. Be aware that life transitions, health changes, uncertainties, and things out of your control can also lead to an imbalance. A common way to identify if your life is out of balance is a feeling of being overwhelmed, tired, drained, disconnected, or unsatisfied with life. If you are feeling this way, it might be a sign that you are taking on too much, so consider what you could do to lighten your load. It may also be a sign you are not doing enough of what is truly important to you, so find ways to incorporate it into your life even if it is in small or creative ways to start with.

Be realistic about the expectations you have for yourself and others, set healthy boundaries, and do not feel guilty about saying no. You cannot do it all, all the time, or be everything to everyone, so some prioritization is necessary. You may end up with some tough decisions to make, however, make sure that taking care of yourself is your top priority at least some of the time.

Reevaluate the time and energy you do have and what might be unnecessarily consuming your time and energy, for instance; toxic relationships, unrealistic or unsustainable expectations, worrying about the future, feeling guilty, shopping or spending habits, drug or alcohol use, or watching too much TV. Identify the barriers, such as not having enough time or money, that might be preventing you from having more balance in your life, then problem solve ways of working around them. For example, if you don't have enough time to work full time and to be a support to your kids for their virtual learning, you may consider hiring a tutor or cutting down your work hours. If you would like more time for yourself, find ways to schedule it into your day and stick to your schedule. If you want to exercise more, but do not have the money for a gym membership or the gym is closed, you could exercise outdoors or do exercise videos at home. If motivation is an issue, you could start a reward or accountability system for yourself and remind yourself why you are striving for balance in the first place.

Focus on what is in your control and what you can do about it. Take one step at a time, as many days as you can, and occasionally reevaluate where you are, how far you've come, and the direction you're headed. Periodically, ask yourself what you need to feel more balanced and what you can do to get that need met. If the barriers or problems you encounter ever seem too insurmountable to tackle on your own or you are not able to make the progress you are wishing for, seek out support. Family members or friends may be helpful, but if that doesn't work, you could also talk to your doctor about a referral to a mental health professional, as it may be a symptom of an underlying mental health condition. Please be kind to yourself no matter what because being frustrated with yourself that you could not do it all or get it all done never accomplishes much. Be aware that your definition of a good balance can change and it may take some trial and error to find what works best for you. Finding balance is an ongoing process throughout your life and maintaining it is a skill that can take some practice and patience to master.

UPCOMING EVENTS

BFW Lunch Series - Casey's Kitchen 3.0 - Sept 17 | [CLICK HERE](#)

BFW Lunch Series - Kids' Cooking Creations - Sept 24 | [CLICK HERE](#)

Wine and Gyn - Sept 29 | [CLICK HERE](#)

► **FOR MORE INFORMATION** [go to bellin.org/calendar](http://go.to/bellin.org/calendar)

