

JULY 2021

[View this email in your browser](#)

Happy Wednesday!

Today's Wellness Wednesday newsletter is a bumper edition with great articles and information, including:

- tips to conquer the winter blues
- target 400 is everyone's goal - Open Day 2021
- stay connected, stay safe online
- 'lunch and learn' sessions
- diabetes - increase awareness, reduce stigma
- why laughter is the best medicine
- get ready for STEPtember!

We encourage you to continue taking the time to identify ways you can support your ongoing self-care and wellbeing.

Stay well and have a great Wednesday.

Tips to conquer the winter blues

In Australia, we're lucky to still see sunshine on most winter days – however, while we might not be as susceptible to Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) as our European and North American friends, it's still common for people to report a drop in their mood as the temperature lowers.

Often the 'winter blues' set in slowly and many of us fail to notice until we're feeling down. Whether you're experiencing low moods, energy or simply wanting to stay happy and well throughout winter, there are a few things you can do.

Here are six tips to conquer the blues this winter:

Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

When we don't get enough of a particular nutrient, it may affect our mindsets or behaviours. Eating plenty of nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables is a great way to get the vitamins and minerals we require to be happy and healthy.

Shorter days and cold weather can make it difficult to get out of bed, and often leads to feelings of fatigue and lethargy throughout the day. Going to bed and getting up at the same time every day is a good way to train the body to get enough sleep.

Exercise regularly

Winter weather can make it very difficult to summon the motivation to get outside and get moving, but regular exercise is just as important in winter as it is during other seasons – if not more so. Exercising is important for your body to stay healthy, but it is also a great tool for improving moods and your state of mind.

Spend time with loved ones

Just as it can be hard to get out the door to exercise, it can also feel challenging to make the effort to meet up with friends and family. Leaving the comfort of your couch to spend time with the people you love is important for maintaining good mental health.

Enjoy time in the sunshine

Winter is hardly a time where we feel like spending time outside. However, spending time outdoors is important for our physical and mental health. Vitamin D is one of the most important vitamins for good mental health and the best way to maintain healthy levels is to spend time outdoors in the sun – whether that's a 15-minute walk at lunchtime or a trip to the park with the kids.

Take a few minutes to read the original article '[Six tips to beat the winter blues](#)'.



Target 400 is everyone's goal – Open Day 2021

Let's make Open Day 2021 special! We are calling on all staff to get involved in Open Day, Sunday 15 August, even if it's just bringing yourself and friends, family and kids to campus to add to the atmosphere.

Federation is aiming to attract 400 additional higher education and 200 additional TAFE students in 2022 to keep our University strong and sustainable.

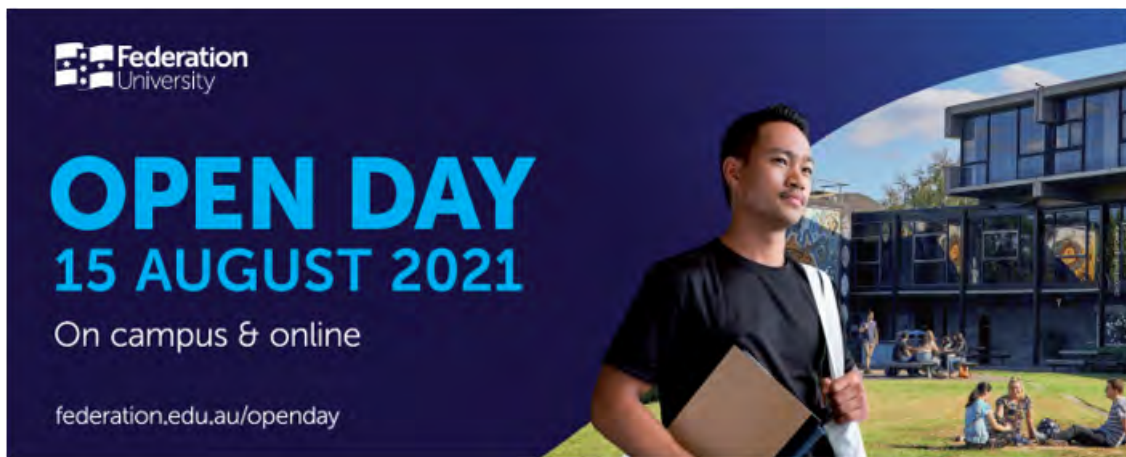
Marketing is working hard to attract new students, but we all have a role to play in showing

Calling for staff ambassadors to help out

Marketing is also looking for staff to help out on the day, so if you are able to lend a hand, please email [Erika Garcia](#) for more information. Check with your manager if you can take TOIL or other options to allow you to participate.

More information will be coming out over the coming month via FedNews, FedPerspectives and Wellness Wednesdays, so please keep an eye out for updates.

You can also check out the [Open Day web page](#) and if you're not across the Target 400 initiative, watch the [VC Staff Forum video](#).



Stay connected, stay safe online

The internet and social media are part of our everyday lives and provides the opportunity to meet and communicate with people from all over the world. Remaining safe as we connect with friends, family and colleagues is important as online technology and new modes of communication are used by some to post provocative, inflammatory, or hateful comments online.

One of our staff members, Dr Evita March, Senior Lecturer, Psychology is well renowned for her research in interpersonal relationships, cyberpsychology and personality; specifically, personality traits that predict perpetration of online antisocial behaviours. Her work on predicting the personality traits and motivations of internet 'trolls' was an Australian-first study, and she has received both national and international recognition for her research on cyber hate.

On 29 July 2021, Dr March will be presenting a 'lunch and learn' session for staff on 'Your online experience - how it is constructed and understanding ways to master it', where she will provide insights into the interaction of algorithms and humans and how we can construct healthy online spaces.

[Register for the 'Your online experience - how it is constructed and understanding ways to master it' session.](#)

outline of our understanding of the internet troll, the psychological profile, and how we might combat trolls to make the internet a safer place.



Lunch and learn sessions

The 'lunch and learn' sessions are designed to provide staff with information and assistance in a range of areas that support their personal and professional needs and interests.

We encourage you to check out and register for the upcoming sessions below.

[Register here for any 'lunch and learn' session](#). A Microsoft Teams link will be sent following registration.

Upcoming sessions include:

| | |
|---|--|
| 15 July 2021 12:30pm – 1:15pm | Understanding the role and physiology of exercise and nutrition in preventing and managing diabetes <i>Jacqui Pengelly, Lecturer, Clinical Exercise Physiology/Exercise and Sports Sciences, School of Science, Psychology and Sport</i> |
| 29 July 2021 12:30pm – 1:15pm | Your online experience - how it is constructed and understanding ways to master it <i>Dr Evita March, Senior Lecturer, Psychology, School of Science, Psychology and Sport</i> |

within a few days for the session.



Diabetes – increase awareness, reduce stigma

This week is [National Diabetes Week](#) and aims to raise awareness of diabetes risks, prevention, support and also the experience of people with diabetes.

Living with diabetes can be challenging both physically and emotionally. Research shows more than 4 in 5 people with diabetes have experienced stigma at some point in their lives. This means that many people have been judged or treated differently than others because of their illness.

Sometimes diabetes-related stigma is based on a lack of understanding, but sometimes it is based on negative attitudes or prejudice. It affects many people living with diabetes – with a very real impact on their self-care, physical health, mental health and quality of life.

Let's change the way we talk about diabetes by showing compassion and respect.

Did you know?

An estimated 500,000 Australians are living with silent, type 2 diabetes, many going undiagnosed for up to seven years.

You can learn more about diabetes prevention and management by [registering for the following diabetes 'lunch and learn' session](#):

| | |
|---|--|
| 15 July 2021 12:30pm – 1:15pm | Understanding the role and physiology of exercise and nutrition in preventing and managing diabetes <i>Jacqui Pengelly, Lecturer, Clinical Exercise Physiology/Exercise and Sports Sciences, School of Science, Psychology and Sport</i> |
|---|--|



Why laughter is the best medicine

Laughter is ancient, primitive and instinctual, and a fundamental part of everyday life – something most of us indulge in naturally. However, while the ability to laugh is innate, the decision to activate and use it to its full ability is a choice.

Intuitively we know that laughter is one of the best tools we have for dealing with stress, and science backs that up. In fact, research into laughter goes even further, revealing that it is a potent stimulant with a contagious power that provides many benefits for the mind and body.

Below are key findings that should keep us wanting to laugh it up.

Laughter is a potent endorphin releaser. Studies on laughter show that laughing with others releases endorphins in the brain – our homegrown feel-good chemicals – via opioid receptors. The more opioid receptors a person has in their brain, the more powerful the effect.

Laughter contagiously forms social bonds. The endorphin effect described above also explains why social laughter is so contagious. Spreading endorphin release through groups promotes a sense of togetherness and safety. This is why when someone starts laughing, others will laugh even if they're not sure what everyone is laughing about.

Laughter fosters brain connectivity. Not all laughter is the same, and it turns out that decoding a laugh is more challenging than it seems. One study found differences in how we perceive, for example, joyous laughter versus taunting laughter versus tickling laughter – each of which activates connections between different brain regions. This fosters

Laughter has an effect similar to antidepressants. Laughing activates the release of the neurotransmitter serotonin, the same brain chemical affected by the most common types of antidepressants, SSRIs. It's not clear from the research how long this effect sticks around, but the burst of brain activity laughing triggers is undoubtedly potent, at least for short periods of time.

Laughter protects your heart. Research has shown that laughter has an anti-inflammatory effect that protects blood vessels and heart muscles from the damaging effects of cardiovascular disease. How this happens isn't entirely understood, but it seems related to lessening the body's stress response, which is directly linked to increased inflammation. Regular, hearty laughter should probably be part of every heart disease prevention program.

Check out the original Forbes article '[Six science-based reasons why laughter is the best medicine](#)' and the resources below to add some laughter to your day.

- ['Why we laugh'](#) (TED talk by Professor Sophie Scott, University College London)
- [Australian comedy podcasts](#) (if you're listening to some of these already)
- [The five funniest moments in Australian history](#) (news article from the ABC)
- [100 best comedy movies](#) (as rated by the Time Out London website)



Get ready for STEPtember!

We are excited to announce that this year we are stepping up and encouraging everyone to start planning teams and participate in STEPtember 2021.

It is essential to get active, get connected and foster teamwork across the University community. That is why we are stepping up and challenging you to take 10,000 steps each

STEPtember is a major fundraiser to help support research and support for people with cerebral palsy. Every 20 hours, an Australian child is born with cerebral palsy resulting from damage to the developing brain. Whether it's through early intervention, life-changing technology and equipment, or ground-breaking research, by stepping up you can help to improve the lives of children and adults living with cerebral palsy.

Stay tuned for more information! This year, STEPtember participation is free for staff and we will be sharing more information around how you can sign up over the next few weeks.



Quick Links

[Flourish - health and wellbeing e-magazine - July 2021](#)

[Mental health and wellbeing information guide](#)

[Health and wellbeing resources](#)

[COVID-19 support for staff](#)