

NOVEMBER 2021

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Happy Wednesday and welcome to our final Wellness Wednesday newsletter.

As we approach the final weeks of what has been another eventful and challenging year, we encourage you to read these articles and keep taking the time to identify ways you can support your ongoing self-care and wellbeing.

In today's edition you can check out these great items:

- our health and wellbeing focus
- men's mental health
- staying strong as we age
- be SunSmart, save your skin
- mindful tips to reduce stress these holidays
- send a virtual 'thank you' card
- take a break for your health's sake
- the editor's final note

In what is our 43<sup>rd</sup> and final edition of 'Wellness Wednesday', we want to thank you for taking time to invest in your own health and wellbeing, and we hope that the newsletters have provided you with practical strategies that allow you to flourish.

**Stay well, have a great Wednesday, and thank you for your readership.**



## Our health and wellbeing focus

Throughout the year, we have all continued to make a significant effort to manage the

challenges of the pandemic. We have adjusted and adapted to the impact of lockdowns, and thankfully, the significant easing of restrictions as we find a new way of living, reconnecting with one another and working from campus. As a University community, we have made an amazing effort in continuing to focus on keeping ourselves, our families and our communities safe.

Supported by the health and wellbeing initiatives implemented by the Human Resources team, the safety and wellbeing of our staff, students and wider University community remains the highest priority.

The [Mental health and wellbeing information guide \(pdf, 620kb\)](#) continues to underpin the focus on providing information and positive approaches to enable you to thrive in a productive and safe work environment. The guidelines, daily routines and positive approaches to work and problem-solving contained in the guide have been complemented by the programs offered by Human Resources during 2021. These have included:

- personal development sessions
- 'lunch and learn' sessions
- mental health training modules
- Wellness Wednesday newsletters.

As we approach the end of the year, it is important that we all take time to reflect on the year that has been, and find the silver linings and the strategies that have worked for us in building and maintaining healthy routines and habits.

You are encouraged to continue using the [Mental health and wellbeing information guide](#), identify activities that allow you to focus on your self-care and continue to thrive as you head into the holiday break and 2022.

**Stay well, stay safe and have a happy end of year break.**



**Men's mental health**

Life can throw us curveballs. Yet, even when things seem tough, there's a lot we can do to look after ourselves and others. That's why, through specialist organisations, reliable and expert information is provided to help men cope and live happier, healthier, longer lives – no matter what life throws at us.

Globally, on average, 1 man dies by suicide every minute of every day. In Australia, 3 out of 4 suicides are by men.

Stronger social connections can reduce the risk of suicide. That means more men talking about stuff that really matters. Those conversations don't always come easy. Being a man of more words isn't about dialling up the banter. It's about carving out space for meaningful chats about the bigger stuff in life. From talking about the kids, the bills, a new job or a setback – the right conversation can make all the difference to a mate who might be struggling.

Helping a friend is easy when you know how, and the following four steps in the ALEC model are there to help navigate a conversation with a man who might be struggling.

- **Ask** – start by mentioning anything different you've noticed. Maybe he's spending more time at the bar, coming into work late, or missing social events. Trust your instinct. Remember, we often say 'I'm fine' when we're not. Don't be afraid to ask twice.
- **Listen** – try to give him your full attention, without interruptions. Don't feel you have to diagnose problems, offer solutions or give advice. Just let him know you're all ears, judgement-free.
- **Encourage action** – help him to focus on simple things that might improve his wellbeing. Is he getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating properly? Maybe there's something that's helped before? Suggest he tells other people he trusts how he's feeling. This will make things easier, for both of you.
- **Check in** – suggest you catch up soon, in person if you can. If you can't manage a meet-up, make time for a call, or drop him a message. This will show you care. Plus, you'll get a feel for whether he's feeling any better.

You can [read the full article in the November edition of Flourish.](#)

Reach out for support when you need it - everyone needs support from time to time. Talking to a loved one, a trusted friend, your doctor or our [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) can make all the difference.

If you're worried somebody's life is in immediate danger, go directly to emergency services.



## Staying strong as we age

Strength training is when we stress our muscles to tear the muscle fibres at a microscopic level.

Strengthening our muscles is a bit like making porridge, where too much stress (too hot!) can cause the kind of pain that means a trip to the physiotherapist. Not enough stress on the muscle (too cold!) will make no strength improvements.

The stress on muscles (and the best porridge) is when it is just right. The right amount of stress placed on muscles causes those muscles to feel achy for the next day or two. The technical term of this muscular achiness is DOMS – which means Delayed Onset Muscular Soreness. DOMS is the healing process for those microscopic tears. The result of this process is that the muscle grows as it heals, and we get stronger.

The good news is that strength training does not have to come dressed in lycra. Neither is it the prerogative of the young!

### Three reasons why strength training is vital as we age:

- Bone strength – we lose bone density as we age. And women, with the loss of estrogen at menopause, lose much more than their male counterparts. Brittle bones are much easier to break and are harder to heal. The most effective way to create and maintain strong bones is to regularly engage in strength training.
- Resting muscle burns fat – muscles also do something very magical while they are resting, they burn fat. So, a nice way to think about the DOMS ache after exercise is that this process is eating away at excess fat stores.

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- Better falls – no one ever wants to have a fall. However, the statistical chance of having a fall and the consequences of having a fall is magnified with age. Strength training can help build stronger bones, reduce the risk of a break on impact, and can assist with balance to help avoid falls.

Remember, strength training does not have to happen in a gym, or just with dumbbells. If you like going for a walk, include some steps or hills. If you are gardening, try and make your load a little bigger. Or, if you are lifting weights, try and change up either the amount of load or the number of repetitions.

For more information and resources for staying active and healthy, [check out the Get Active Victoria web page](#).



## Be SunSmart, save your Skin.

It's the people in your life that matter most in this world. Your family and friends who would give anything to keep you around. Sadly, skin cancer kills twice as many men as women each year.

The good news is, if you cover something it lasts longer. The rule applies to 'things' like your car, your deck and your barbecue. It also applies to your skin – at any age.

### Protect your skin!

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancer. Fortunately, most skin cancer can be prevented by using good sun protection when the UV is above 3.

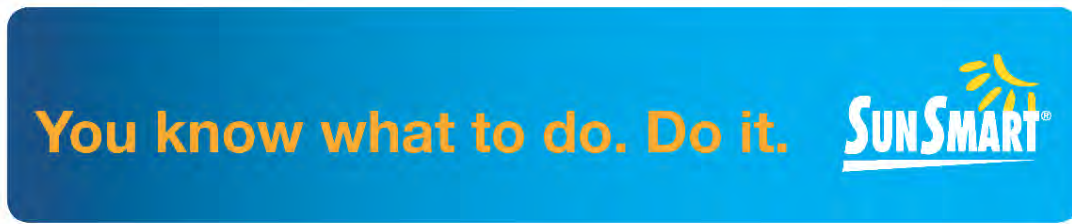
With the following tips from the SunSmart campaign, you can learn how easy it is to cover up during sun protection times.

- **Slip** on clothing
- **Slop** on sunscreen
- **Slap** on a hat
- **Seek** shade, and
- **Slide** on sunglasses.

It's never too late to improve your sun protection habits, whether you're six months or 60 years old.

## Past Issues

Check out the [SunSmart website](#) for more information on reducing your risk of skin cancer.



For further information visit [SunSmart.com.au](#) or call 13 11 20



## Take a break for your health's sake

Finding the perfect time to take annual leave can be tricky and easily fall off the radar. If a business is going through a busy period or is understaffed, employees might fear falling behind in their work, appearing slack, or have a lack of trust in their team to do their work while they're away.

More than a third of full-time employees in Australia have four or more weeks' worth of annual leave accrued and a whopping 257,000 employees have more than 10 weeks, reports Roy Morgan (2016).

However, breaking an employee's work cycle has been proven to have enormous benefits for both employees and their organisation.

On an individual level it can help:

- reduce stress – which in turn lowers the risk of anxiety and depression
- improve mood – helping to ease social relationships
- boost immunity – people who take more holiday time are known to not get sick as often and it can lower the risk of a heart attack in the long run.

On an organisational level it can help:

- improve morale – happier staff equals happier teams
- increase productivity – having a well-rested and motivated staff helps work flow
- increase employee retention – less turnover of staff
- decrease unplanned absences – less people taking sick leave.

Whatever your job, annual leave is often a crucial part of it. Our minds and our bodies need proper breaks from the workplace, and regularly!

[Read the original Heads up article 'How encouraging employees to take their annual leave can benefit your workplace'.](#)



## Mindful tips to reduce stress these holidays

With just 38 days until Christmas Day, you could be forgiven if you don't feel quite prepared or not as cheery as normal. If so, you are not alone. Many find that the holidays bring as much stress as they do joy. But there are ways to ease through the season.

Psychologist and Director of the Johns Hopkins Mindfulness Program, Neda Gould, Ph.D., shares valuable information and tips on how mindfulness can help you prepare for a positive and fulfilling holiday break.

What is mindfulness? 'Mindfulness is bringing your attention to the present moment with an element of non-judgment and acceptance. It is noticing when we get caught up in thoughts about the past or the future, and returning our attention to the present – the only reality', explains Gould.

While mindfulness can be a formal meditation practice, there are also informal ways to practice this skill. This can give us perspective and decrease stress.

Four ways to make your holidays brighter:

- **Accept imperfection** – Can good be good enough? We often set the bar impossibly high for ourselves and then feel upset when our celebrations don't live up to expectations. Before you start preparing, acknowledge that things may not go exactly as planned and it is OK if it's not perfect. Imperfection is healthy and normal.
- **Don't lose sight of what really counts** – Let's admit it, the holidays can get hectic. If you are feeling overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle, ask yourself:
  - Where does this fit in the grand scheme of things? If you're frustrated by the long grocery line you're standing in, remember that it is just a long grocery line – nothing more. Don't let it spoil your afternoon.
  - Can I use this moment of frustration as an opportunity to reflect? While the cashier rings up the customers ahead of you, take inventory of the good

things that have happened today or the things you are grateful for.

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- Even if this moment seems stressful, can I find a way to make it pleasant? Connect with someone else in line with a compliment or kind gesture, or notice what's around you with fresh eyes and an open mind.
- **Respond with kindness** – You can't change how others act during the stresses of the holiday season, but you can change how you respond to situations:
  - If you encounter a difficult person, tell yourself, 'this person may be suffering, and that's why they're acting this way.' This can soften your frustration, helps you be more compassionate and reminds you that it's not personal.
  - Keep in mind that the holidays are especially difficult for those who are alone. See if you can extend an act of kindness to those you know are without family and friends during this time of year.
  - If things do get tense with someone, take a few deep breaths. Those few breaths can shift things and give you new perspective.
- **Rethink your resolutions** – Typically New Year's resolutions can set you up for failure. If you want to better yourself in the new year, follow these tips for success:
  - Start small. Break your goals into tinier steps over the course of the year. If weight loss is your goal, it doesn't have to be dramatic. Try to eat more veggies during your first month and gradually cut back on sweets throughout the next.
  - Be kind to yourself. If you didn't achieve last year's resolution or stray from the path this time around, let it go! With practice, we can notice this self-critic, let go of that negativity and pick our goals back up without the guilt or shame.

[Read the original John Hopkins medical article '4 mindful tips to de-stress this holiday season' for more information.](#)



Send a virtual 'thank you' card



## Subscribe [Past Issues](#)

After what has been another year of changes and challenges, a little 'thank you' can go a long way!

A series of Federation University virtual 'thank you' cards are available so you can send a personalised 'thank you' or 'well done' message to a colleague, supervisor, staff member, student, or any stakeholder that has made a positive impact on your year.

[Access and create a personalised card and message here](#)

Gratitude comes naturally, when you let it. Here are some of the benefits of sending a virtual 'thank you':

- they cultivate a thoughtful environment
- gratitude is contagious
- it increases job satisfaction and performance
- it is beneficial to our overall health and wellbeing
- it provides an immediate boost of self-confidence and happiness.

Read the article '[In times of crisis, a little thanks goes a long way](#)' and reflect on a very busy year and recognise the difference people have made!



## The editor's final note

It has been an pleasure crafting the fortnightly Wellness Wednesday for you, and we hope they have provided you with helpful information, tips, strategies – and the occasional laugh – to support your health and wellbeing.

As in everything we do, it is always a team effort and I am grateful for the support of my Human Resources colleagues in creating what has been a valuable, positive and supportive resource for us all.

As a final and parting note, take a moment to look at the image below and remember it ... because you are!

Stay awesome,

Jason.

you  
are  
amazing

REMEMBER THAT.

## Quick Links

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

[Mental health and wellbeing information guide](#)

[Health and wellbeing resources](#)

[COVID-19 support for staff](#)



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