

December 2021

ENGWellness Staff/Faculty Newsletter



Produced by: the ENGWellness Ambassador

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MAKE THE MOST OF THE HOLIDAYS

Although it may seem like a given part of any holiday, keeping up with your well-being is not as easy as it may seem. To those of you who may not know, ENGWellness' entire philosophy surrounds the idea that everyone has 9 dimensions of wellness that require fulfillment in order for overall wellness to be maintained. There are a select few dimensions that holiday seasons tend to interrupt, so we thought we'd give some pointers on how to identify and address these interruptions. To start, most people spend way more money than they were trying to budget for, and fall behind in their financial wellness. The first step in avoiding over-budget spending is making a realistic budget. This means taking a look at previous years and trying to guess what areas of spending you could actually improve on, not just the ones you want to. Try to write these things down, and create your budget around this. The second main area is physical wellness. Just because its the holidays many of us use it as an excuse to not care about diet, sleep, or exercise, and end up spending our time off laying in bed or on the couch. Reminding yourself to keep on top of your physical wellness will allow you to enjoy your time off more, and be more productive with your relaxation.

Wellness Break: Tough Conversations

For many of us, the holidays are a time to spend with friends and family. Whether it's a family gathering, family traditions, or vacationing with friends, the holiday break is a great opportunity for quality time with others. Work, school, and extracurricular responsibilities can get in the way sometimes, and we can forget what relationships mean to us. Relationships with our friends and family are ultimately what matter to us, and help bring meaning to our lives. If we've learned anything over the past couple of years of lockdowns, its that community matters to us, and the meaning it brings us is a necessity to live a fulfilling life. With COVID comes a lot of hot takes and controversial opinions, and for some of us this can create tensions in our relationships with friends and family. But life is hard for everyone, and these lockdowns have only increased the baseline of suffering that so often occurs in life. If a person holds an offensive opinion, or follows someone on Facebook or Instagram that offends you, don't take it personally, and don't let it get in the way of what's important. Life is hard for everyone, and if someone believes something different from yourself cut them some slack - they're only doing their best to make sense of these crazy times. Life is short, so don't waste it trying to prove yourself right in a situation with no clear-cut answers. Go have whatever conversations may need to be had, and move forward together, acknowledging what's most important in life.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS WITH REV. BRIAN BORK

The following is a summary of an interview conducted with the Chair of the [Chaplain's Association](#) [Brian Bork](#).

A little bit about Brian.

Brian is an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church -- famous for its love of Universities and all things bookish. He is chair of the chaplain's association and is a chaplain at both UW and WLU, and has been one since 2008. Feel free to drop by his office (3108 SLC), and he'll always pick up the tab for coffee or tea.

What is spiritual wellness?

I would say spiritual wellness can be broken into 5 components. The first is - reflection: develop a sense of purpose, and improves reflection on the meaning of life and our values, beliefs, faith, hope, trust. It connects with our deep affective ways of interacting with the world. The second is that it is not just in our heads or hearts, but also in our bodies: - embodiment. There are many physical habits that go along with spirituality like meditation, prayer, yoga, stillness, quiet, and reflection. Spirituality is also not practiced alone -- it is something that people very often do together. This brings us to our third point: spiritual wellness facilitates - social connectedness. Connectedness is a big factor in spirituality, religious traditions and practices, and can offer opportunities for people to connect with one another, reducing the the issues of social isolation and lack of tremendous support that the pandemic brought. A fourth piece of spiritual wellness is that it allows you to live into the - rhythms of your life. Things like holidays and vacations and celebrations are all rituals that give people anchors in time and space, and religious or spiritual tradition provide more of these. Gatherings on Sunday within the Christian tradition, or large gatherings in Mecca in the Muslim tradition are a couple of examples of how this occurs. The final major factor in spiritual wellness comes a - sense of transcendence. A broad term covering senses of awe, wonder, and the sense that people relate to a higher power, a sense of transcendence provides a highly important piece in spiritual wellness. Some of the specific spiritual ideas surrounding transcendence come from divinity, or for the less religiously inclined it could just come from beautiful nature scenes. Connecting with the transcendent is a key factor in many religions, and praying is a primary form of this.

Why does spiritual wellness matter?

Implicit in many of the above answers is why this is important. Thinking about questions of meaning, what one's purpose is, why we're here, what kinds of gifts we have, what ways can these gifts serve the world and my neighbours? Exploring these questions is critical to overall well-being and are also a big part of spiritual wellness. Spiritual wellness always means having a sense of connectedness, and, as mentioned prior, having this sense of connectedness and community helps especially during times of adversity, like our collective experience of the pandemic, for instance. The sense of transcendence that spiritual wellness brings is also hugely beneficial. COVID has shown us and reminded us of our limitations as humans: death, suffering, fragility. The ability to contemplate that and finding community supports in the midst of that is massively important for our overall well-being.

Do people have to believe in God to have spiritual wellness?

First off, it is important to note that there are a lot of people that believe in God that are probably not spiritually well. That is, belief in God does not mean that you will be spiritually well. For me (Rev. Bork) personally, experiencing the presence of God is the pinnacle of a spiritual wellness, but I recognize that that's coming from my own personal spiritual tradition and may not be the same for everyone. A big component in spiritual wellness is a sense of awe and mystery that come along with the journey.

What can people do who don't believe in anything to increase their spiritual wellness?

If you don't believe in God or are agnostic or just aren't sure, there are still wonderful things to do in terms of fostering wellness in your life. I would also humbly suggest that everyone believes in something, not in the sense that everyone believes in God or gods, but everyone believes in something that they hold dear. It may be values, it might be a particular framework or philosophy of life, it might be a community or a moral sense of how the world should be, or it might be as simple as a particular career in a particular vocation in a particular field. These shape us and how we live, how we treat our neighbours and understanding this part of what we believe is already a good start in spiritual wellness.

What would you say to those who haven't really thought about 'spiritual' things before?

On a secular campus especially, it can sometimes seem like the spiritual stuff is things we do on the side. It's like a hobby on the side as opposed to a thing that we might be able to do everyday. I run into people on campus all the time who are like, "oh, there's someone who will pray for me here?", or even: "there's someone here who will listen to me wonder about the universe?" I also think that a lot of the things we are taught already have a spiritual meaning implicit in them. Math and science often seem very secular and material focused, but there is an underlying philosophy, a metaphysic, that guides a scientists or mathematicians line of inquiry that relates to a truth about the universe that is spiritual in nature. A second additional point is that if anyone has ever pondered big questions about our purpose, time, death, etc., they are thinking spiritually, even if its not within the framework of a traditional religion

Any additional comments you'd like to share with the engineering community?

Engineers are fantastic problem solvers. The ability to see a problem, strip it down into its component parts and put it back together in a better way is something I love about engineers! But there are also problems in the world that don't have solutions, or at least solutions that are readily apparent, and I would offer a gentle encouragement for engineers to push into those kinds of problems too, and to see what kind of fears, hopes, and trust that may elicit. Exploring these problems can really help when life gets hard, and it is important for everyone to attempt to tackle these types of problems as well. Secondly, I don't think many people know this, so I would like to bring attention to the fact that there is a multi-faith chaplain's association on campus, and we are here for the kind of questions above. You don't need to be affiliated to any particular faith, spirituality, or culture, and we are always happy to sit down and chat with those of you who may want to talk about these sorts of things. You can find us on - [our website](#), and coffee is always on us :) No pressure, no stakes, just fun conversation.

Exploring Indigenous Spiritual Practices

Although Rev. Bork did an excellent job in covering what spiritual wellness is to him, his experiences, beliefs, and understanding of it are based in a Christian philosophy, and therefore do not necessarily represent the diverse spiritual and religious perspectives that exist. So, to begin to add to the understanding that we share with you, we have created a small introduction to the topic of indigenous spirituality.

Please understand that we as the writers have no personal experience with indigenous spirituality, and were hesitant to write this without the help of someone who is. However, we thought it important to bring notice to the fact that these different perspectives exist, and plan on having a full section when we have the help of an Indigenous Spiritual leader. In the meantime, if you want to learn more about it for yourself, checkout...

- [Canadian Encyclopedia: Religion and Spirituality of Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#)
 - A great overview of a history of indigenous practices in Canada. Remains fact-based and avoids conjecture.
- [What is Aboriginal Spirituality?](#)
 - Heavily informed by indigenous peoples, this is a good source to hear about personal experience and their own understanding of spirituality.

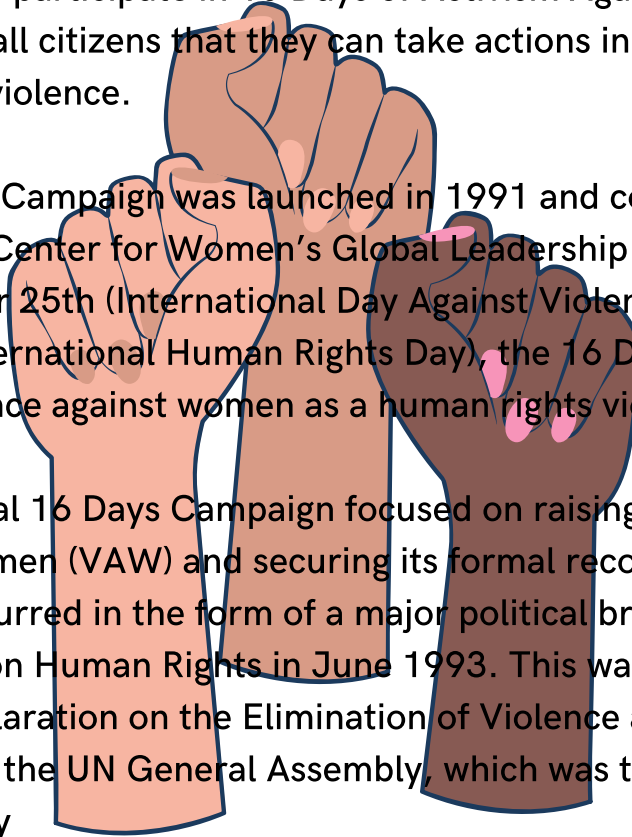


What it's about

Each year, the University of Waterloo joins with organizations, governments, and groups worldwide to participate in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence to remind all citizens that they can take actions in their everyday lives to stop gender-based violence.

The Global 16 Days Campaign was launched in 1991 and continues to be coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL). Running each year from November 25th (International Day Against Violence Against Women) to December 10th (International Human Rights Day), the 16 Day period reinforces the recognition of violence against women as a human rights violation.

Originally, the Global 16 Days Campaign focused on raising awareness about violence against women (VAW) and securing its formal recognition as a human rights violation, which occurred in the form of a major political breakthrough at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in June 1993. This was followed by the formal adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, in December 1993, by the UN General Assembly, which was the first international instrument to clearly



2021 #Purple4Prevention

For 2021, the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO) at Waterloo is partnering with the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region (SASC), Conestoga College, and Wilfrid Laurier University to address sexual violence on campus through a new campaign: #Purple4Prevention.

#Purple4Prevention invites students and employees to take a stand against sexual and gender-based violence, and to show solidarity by purchasing and wearing the new custom tee on Nov. 25, 2021.



Femicide

For its 30th anniversary in 2021, the Campaign will focus on femicide, also referred to as the gender-related killing of women and girls, because we are at a critical turning point. There has been a surge in femicide in many countries due to lockdown and additional measures imposed to contain the COVID—19 pandemic.

To learn more, please visit 16dayscampaign.org

What's happening around campus?

Workshop: Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence (Dec. 7 - 9)

Who: Students, Faculty, and Staff

What: In this interactive workshop, divided over two-days, attendees will develop tools, strategies, and resources to respond effectively to disclosures of sexual violence.

How: Training on sexual violence prevention and response supports the University's commitment to fostering a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment and each of us plays an important role in promoting a safe and respectful environment.

Human Rights Day (December 10th)

Human rights—in Canada and around the world—have never been more important than they are today. As we come to grips with another wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, we see that people have been affected worldwide and that vulnerabilities have been disproportionately exposed. This year has proven that human rights must continue to be at the heart of our policies and actions, so join us on December 10th to recognize the value of the humanity in all of us.

Wellness Programs: Move Your Mind!

A black poster for the 'Move Your Mind' program. The title 'MOVE YOUR MIND' is at the top in large white letters, with a yellow staircase icon integrated into the 'O' of 'YOUR'. Below the title is the text 'A peer-to-peer program dedicated to leveraging physical activity to support our mental health'. The poster is divided into two columns of text. The left column is under the heading 'PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:' and lists four bullet points: 'Support in finding enjoyable ways to be more active', 'Support in identifying goals and tackling barriers', 'Accountability', and 'Access to a Buddy matching program (optional)'. Below this is the heading 'HOW TO JOIN:' followed by 'Self refer at: www.gowarriorsgo.ca/MoveYourMind'. The right column is under the heading 'INTERESTED IN BEING A VOLUNTEER BUDDY?' and lists one bullet point: 'Buddies are paired with participants to join in activities, provide support, and help with motivation and accountability.' Below this is the text 'Check LEADS for volunteer postings or email: athcpwel@uwaterloo.ca'. At the bottom of the poster is the slogan 'Take Time to MOVE!' in large yellow letters.

MOVE YOUR MIND

A peer-to-peer program dedicated to leveraging physical activity to support our mental health

PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:

- » Support in finding enjoyable ways to be more active
- » Support in identifying goals and tackling barriers
- » Accountability
- » Access to a Buddy matching program (optional)

HOW TO JOIN:

- » Self refer at: www.gowarriorsgo.ca/MoveYourMind

INTERESTED IN BEING A VOLUNTEER BUDDY?

- » Buddies are paired with participants to join in activities, provide support, and help with motivation and accountability.

Check LEADS for volunteer postings or email: athcpwel@uwaterloo.ca

Take Time to MOVE!

Additional Resources

The following mental health supports are available to you
Counselling Services - 519-888-4567 ext. 32655

The following crisis supports are available to you as well
Crisis Services Canada: 1-833-531-2600 or text 45645
UW Police - 519-888-4567 ext. 22222

Academic Support

- Student Success Office - Compilation of learning and life skills resources.

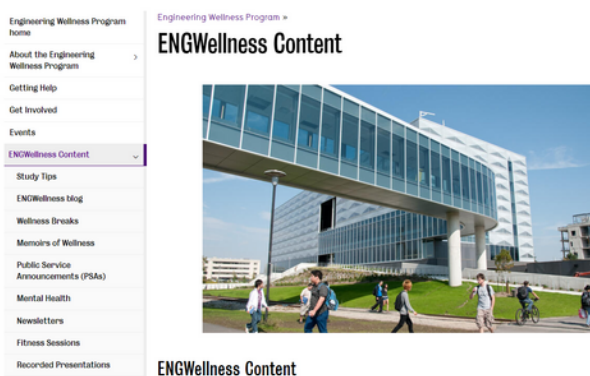
Contacts to book a one-on-one coaching session: (Limited in-person sessions available. Other sessions to be offered virtually.)

Sam Vandekerckhove (MME) - srvandek@uwaterloo.ca /
ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca

Leah Foster (ECE) - ljsims@uwaterloo.ca / ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca

ENGWellness Content

Check out our ENGWellness resources including mental health pages and PSAs. All resources as well as previous newsletters can be accessed under the ENGWellness Content section of our website.



Stay Connected

Be sure to follow us on social media to stay connected and updated.



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LEARN 'Course'

Get news and access to our content modules through our ENGWellness Learn 'course'! Students can enroll using the Self-Registration function within Learn.

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