

February 2022

# ENGWellness Undergraduate Newsletter



Produced by: the ENGWellness Ambassador

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## Welcome Back to Campus!

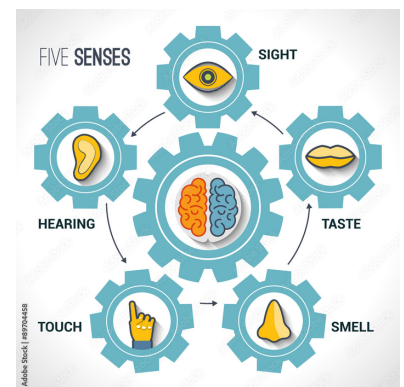
While we initially welcomed you all to the New Year in our last newsletter, we wanted to welcome you back a second time, but this time to campus! It is very exciting that we will be able to see you all again as of the 7th of February, especially since we miss all of your lovely, masked smiling faces. In addition, we would like to wish you all a happy New Lunar Year! This year it is the third zodiac sign, meaning it is a year of the Tiger.

## Wellness and the Five Senses

Everyone knows that there are five senses that humanity relies on for information about our surroundings: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. Today, we are going to talk about how these five senses can influence your well being and how you can further stimulate them to benefit your well being. Each sense has its own sphere of influence and benefits it can bring to the table, so be sure to provide each sense the time it deserves as it serves you everyday without question or hesitation.

### Hearing

The power of sound (specifically music) has long been talked about and recognized among every community as a way to help focus the mind and boost productivity. The benefits do not just stop there though, they extend into many facets of our lives such as social, individual, and cultural benefits-all of which can help to bring about an increase in your wellness.



Culturally, music has been said to be the universal language, long seen as drawing people together from various countries and backgrounds. The simple fact that humanity can be united and form new connections through something as simple as a beat is astounding and very beneficial as it can be a simple way to bring people together in tough times or new, uncomfortable situations



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Individually, it can not only help you focus and be more productive when trying to accomplish work, but in recent studies, it has shown that the sounds around you in everyday life can effect your life itself. Natural sounds, such as leaves blowing and birds chirping, have been shown to lower levels of anxiety and boost the function of your immune system. Whereas in comparison, the sounds of the city and noise pollution, such as the constant sound of cars running and streetlights humming, have been shown to have the exact opposite effect- increasing stress and compromising the immune system.

So as simple as this sounds (pun intended) listen to music that makes you feel happy and relaxed. Download some of those "silly" nature sounds people are always talking about or better yet, get out and enjoy those sounds in real life by going for a walk in the woods or sitting outside and listening to the birds chirp.



## Sight

Every day we use our eyes to spot danger or to look at something we love, but have you every realized just how truly powerful the perception of sight can be? In recent studies, the power of sight was determined to have an even greater physical and physiological effect on our body than we had previously thought possible.

One of the large influences sight has on our body is how much food we consume. This may sound silly at first but if you look at food that is prepared in a restaurant, it is always designed to be as colourful as possible. The more visually colourful a food is, the fresher it looks and the more willing we are to eat it.

In a recent study, this point was further driven home by changing the colours of the plates that

the food itself was served on. It was found that if colourful plates or bowls were used, the participants food consumption would increase by up to 30%, which helps explain why children's plates have always been designed to be as colourful as possible.



Another huge discovery is the relationship between sight and how we perceive pain. If one looks at a wound, such as a cut on your arm, through a device that makes the wound look smaller, the brain will be tricked and the injury itself will hurt less and allow for a faster healing time. Similarly, if we spend time in nature and look at calming and beautiful images, the body starts to produce natural "feel good" hormones, such as dopamine. So if we take a look at images that makes us feel happy or smile, we can in fact tap into the power of our own internal pharmacy and speed up our own healing and boost our mood.

## Smell

While it may be one of the most primitive senses we have, it is also one of the most advanced and fundamental senses we have as well. A single smell can be used to bring back old memories, feelings, and more recently, to diagnose certain diseases or ailments. A decline in your sense of smell overtime can be an indicator for an increased risk of developing Alzheimer's or the result of illness, such as COVID-19.



Neuroassociative conditioning links a specific smell to a specific response. This is very similar to how memories can be associated to specific smells, such as associating the smell of melting butter to pancakes or the smell of baking cookies to your Grandma. The process of conditioning is to pick one of your favourite aromas such as lavender, vanilla, or mint and inhale it every time you are feeling the emotions you desire to tie it to. For example, if you are feeling very happy and energetic and you smell lavender, then eventually

your body will begin to associate the two and whenever you smell lavender in the future, you will begin to feel happy and energetic.

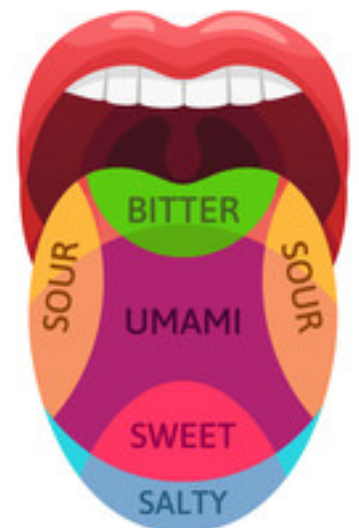
## Taste

This particular sense is often overlooked as our sense of taste relies upon our sense of smell for about 80% of tastes, meaning that when we lose our sense of smell we can only sense five basic tastes: saltiness, sweetness, bitterness, sourness, and savoriness (also called umami). Just because it is limited does not mean it should be overlooked though. Consider the classic saying "a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down", and while your dentist will probably disagree, a sweet taste seems to mitigate some physical discomfort or unease. This is also why after vaccinations, sometimes a child will be given a lollipop or popsicle as the sugar can help to relieve some of the pain they are experiencing.

Another key taste to better health is bitterness, which may sound counterintuitive as most people can't stand bitter tastes such as lemons.

People who are more sensitive to bitter tastes have a tendency to be more selective about what they eat and then end up with healthier diets that are typically lower in sugars and fats. This has led research developments into the modification of adjusting flavor intensities in food so that unhealthy foods become less desirable and healthier foods become desirable, though this change in food flavor profiles won't happen for a few years yet.

A final fact about taste is that if you eat a well balanced meal that includes these five basic flavors you will feel more satisfied with what you have eaten and for a longer period of time. This means that if you eat the same sized meal, but missing one or two of the basic tastes, you may be just as full, but you won't feel satisfied and will likely find yourself snacking an hour or two later looking for those missing tastes.





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## Touch

The sensation of touch has long been recognized for providing many benefits to humanity through simple actions such as a hug, high-five, and a handshake to the more complex and intimate forms of touch such as kissing and massages. One study at the University of Michigan focused on how the touching of one's face can influence your thought process. It was found that when people touch their face it helps to redirect your attention to what is going on in your mind. This is because the same areas of the brain that recognize and processes sensory information also deals with other types of thoughts and actions, so the feeling of touch can spill over and influence other thoughts.



Objects can also subconsciously influence your thoughts and your feelings. If you find yourself stuck in a problem or find your work to be very distressing, you can hold a light object in your hand and it will give you the feeling of your work becoming easier, much like the object being easy to hold. Conversely, if you find yourself in a situation you should be taking more seriously, you can hold a heavy object in order to bring that metaphorical gravity to your thoughts, thus making them heavier.

Lastly, touch can influence your physiological self as well. When you hug someone your body releases oxytocin making you feel happier and less stressed, which is amazing for humanity as we are very social creatures and with every social action it physically makes us feel better and healthier. Touch can also enhance the functionality of your immune system, your circulation, and promote a restful sleep. So quite simply, go and hug someone to make yourself better.

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## What's happening around campus?

### Noon Hour Concert



On Wednesday February 9th and 16th you can attend a concert hosted by Grable that will premier on their YouTube at 12:30pm. So feel free to open up your computers and attend these beautiful concerts as world renowned musicians tune up their instruments and draw us all together through the power of music. On the 9th you can expect to see Judith Davenport on the viola, Peter Shackleton on the clarinet, and Anna Ronai on the piano. While on the 16th you can expect to see Ian Whitman and Talia Hatcher both on bass along with Elliott Braganza on the piano. So turn up the volume and enjoy your lunch to the sweet sounds they will all produce.

### Black History Month

February is Black History Month and the university has stepped forward to have already announced five different events that are free to attend and we would encourage you to attend and learn. This year the month will be following the principle of Ujima, which you may be asking what does the word mean?

"Ujima (oo-JEE-mah) is a Swahili word that represents a principle of Kwanzaa: To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems to solve together. Ujima Black History Month encourages the UWaterloo community and beyond to understand that, though we might differ in strategy and process, progress and liberation is only possible with collective work and shared struggle."

The plans for this month are a collaborative initiative from the faculty and staff from the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (EDI-R), the departments of English and History, and the Dean of Arts Office. If you are looking for more information or to sign up for the events please head to this [website](#) and take a look.

## 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](#): 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645  
[UW Police](#): 519-888-4567 ext. 22222

### Academic Support

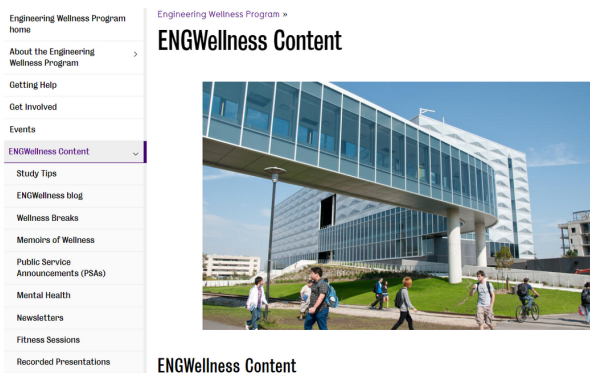
- [Student Success Office](#): Compilation of learning and life skills resources.

Contacts to book a one-on-one coaching session:

Sam Vandekerckhove (MME) - [srvandek@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:srvandek@uwaterloo.ca) /  
[ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca)  
Leah Foster (ECE) – [ljsims@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ljsims@uwaterloo.ca) / [ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca](mailto: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.



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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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