

November 2021



ENGWellness Undergraduate Newsletter

Produced by: the ENGWellness Ambassador

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Winter is Coming...

And it's going to last much longer than it did in Game of Thrones Season 8. Rest assured, ENGWellness has got some tips for you to go from surviving to thriving in this beautiful Canadian season. For those of you who are new to the winter experience -- don't let us veterans dismay you; winter can actually be a lot of fun. Whether it's the sparkling snow at night, the lights-filled parks and public spaces, or a snowball fight, winter is like everything else; it is what you make of it. Dr. Wayne Dyer was right when he said that "if you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change." Yes, like everything else, there are bad parts of winter. But it's become main stream now to just focus on these parts, and forget all the positives that it can bring as well. Winter, like everything else, changes once you look at in a different, more positive light. So instead of complaining about slipping on your driveway going to your car, get excited about going tobogganing with your friends. Go skiing, learn how to snowboard, and go skating in Victoria Park. Make the most of Winter's lemons, and you'll have some great lemonade to sip on. Although changing the way we look at Winter can do a lot, it cannot solve all your problems. For example, the lack of sunlight can seriously have an impact on mental well-being, so don't forgo things like vitamin D or a sunlamp. Just because you start looking at things with a 'positive light' -- there is still a reality out there. But again, trying to complain less, doing more fun activities, and focusing on the good parts of Winter will still help us all.

Wellness Break: Productive Procrastination

Happiness is relative, and so is the enjoyability of tasks that need to get done. If you find yourself sitting in front of a computer with no mental energy to focus, or no interests at all in the task at hand, deciding to spend hours diving deeper into the rabbit hole of YouTube, then I've got the solution for you.

There will always be "productive" tasks to be done, and, just because you don't want to do a specific school task, doesn't mean doing anything else is procrastinating. In fact, procrastination can be a good thing – productive procrastination, that is. Instead of scrolling through social media, YouTube, or playing a video game to procrastinate, how about spending some time to get household chores done, call up a friend or family member that you've been meaning to, renew your driver's license, make a grocery list, etc. If you really can't do your school task, then doing something else will be relatively enjoyable compared to that, and you'll get more of it done than you would've if you tried to do it when you had free time.

So, take advantage of the fact that doing chores is more enjoyable when it's done instead of schoolwork, as opposed to enjoying time off, and go clean your fridge – it's gross.

VOCATIONAL WELLNESS TIPS FROM A CAREER ADVISOR

Feat. [Kira Bruschke](#)

The following is an overview of an interview we conducted with Kira, a career advisor with [The Centre for Career Action](#), regarding vocational wellness.

Career well-being is liking what you do. It is inextricably tied to other aspects of well being, but it essentially boils down to enjoying your career. Your career may evolve over time and at various stages of your life. Vocational well-being doesn't always have to come from what you're paid to do. It can involve volunteerism, extracurriculars, studies, raising a family, retirement focuses or anything else you dedicate a lot of time to and find fulfilling and meaningful. Some factors that influence vocational well-being include positive relationships with peers and colleagues, a sense of making an impact on an organization or community and alignment with values and skills.

Why does it matter?

There are many different kinds of wellness. There is emotional, financial, social, physical, and several others, and vocational wellness impacts all of these. If you don't have wellness in your job (i.e. you don't enjoy it or aren't satisfied by it), the negative effects usually spill over into other areas of your life as well. Intuitively, this makes sense: If you don't enjoy your job, you will likely be exhausted at the end of each workday, and not have as much time to do the things you enjoy like hanging out with friends, reading, watching TV etc. When you don't have time for these things, your social, emotional, and possibly physical well-being can be impacted too. So, having a career you enjoy and find meaningful is a very important part of remaining well overall. Caring about your vocational wellness means you put time and effort into understanding yourself and how your interests, skills, and values align with career options. This is usually a lifelong process as most people make many career changes in their lifetime, either due to personal circumstances evolving or due to changes in the labour market.

What can students do to increase their chances of having career well-being?

First of all, it is extremely important for you to build self-awareness. Paying attention to the little things that draw your attention, things you enjoy, the things you're good at, the things you value, the problems you enjoy solving or find meaningful, are all factors that you can use to assess the kind of career you'd be interested in. Gaining self-awareness involves critically reflecting on your current and past experiences and making meaning of them. Interests, skills and values can change, and if you're not continuously reflecting on your experiences and the ways you interact with the world, you may neglect to adjust your (career) choices accordingly. Additionally, students sometimes choose a career based on the 'title' or societal prestige of the career, and may disregard their own personal interests and values. Although it can be a large time commitment to reflect and focus on who you are and what you want in a career, this is a very important decision, and should be treated as such. Although the title associated with your job can bring some meaning, that will not matter if you do not personally match with your career. Students who match well with their career often research their options by job shadowing, volunteering, talking to people in their career of interest, or choosing co-op placements to test out career options. Because social media, TV, and societal views all shape how we view a career, our ideas can be far off of what the real thing is like until we go out and see for ourselves.

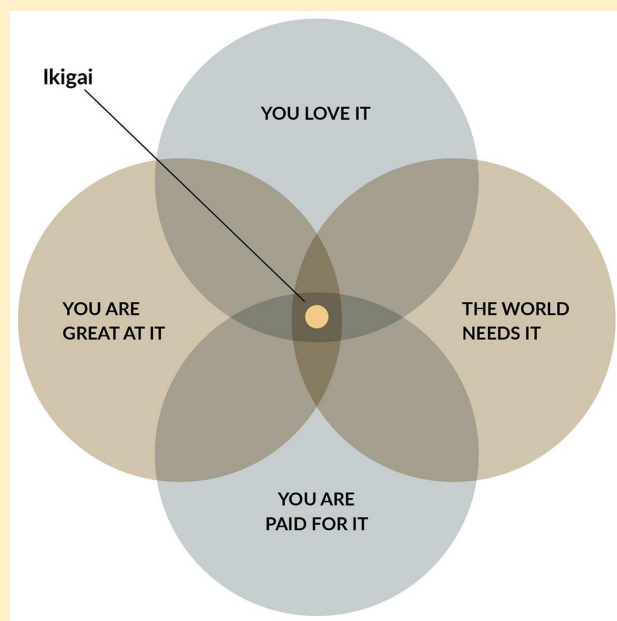
What might people do to increase vocational wellness if they already have a career?

Whether you love, hate, or tolerate your job, there's always room for improving your vocational wellness. The first thing you could do is starting to ask yourself questions like "What, specifically, do or don't I like about this job? What energizes me? What drains me? Is something missing? Are there things I could do to improve?" Asking yourself these questions will change the framework in which you view your work and career, and can give it a new appeal. For some of you who maybe don't enjoy your career (which, data shows, there's a lot), try to look for small changes to make; the day-to-day tasks that you do can have a huge impact on how you view your work. For example, join a cause at work, or start up an initiative that you care about. Find tasks to do that benefit your work, but also give you a sense of purpose.

Additionally, having career conversations can also lead to vocational wellness, so finding a mentor in your organization or in your field that you can chat with about your goals and receive feedback from is beneficial. Building strong relationships at work increases career well-being in general so consider making time to build strong rapport with colleagues and peers as well. And finally, if you find your work environment is not aligned with what matters to you or doesn't feel safe psychologically, consider finding an organization that is a better fit and that promotes and encourages its employees' wellbeing.

Ikigai and Vocational Wellness

Ikigai (pronounced ee-key-guy) is an ancient Japanese concept that somewhat translates to having a reason for being. It's about having a sense of purpose and a task to do that brings you fulfillment but also helps others in some way. In the Western world, Ikigai is often represented in the form of a Venn diagram. (See image attached) Finding one's 'Ikigai' involves reflecting on what you love, what you do well, what the world needs and what you can be rewarded or paid for. Reflecting on these questions is not an easy task for most people. Meeting basic needs (food, shelter, security, and relationships) is typically a priority before focusing on purpose and meaning. When all basic needs are met, identifying your Ikigai can strengthen your sense of purpose and be a helpful guide in choosing how you spend your time.



Ikigai is infused into career education at the Centre for Career Action because it captures what's important in a career, but also recognizes that there are multiple overlapping parts, and that finding the right balance is different for everyone. Some of the concepts discussed in this interview may put a lot of pressure on the individual to figure everything out themselves, or that gaining vocational wellness simply comes from putting in the time and effort to think about what you want and why. But an important part about Ikigai is that it understands some of the reality factors involved in a career (and life) like needing to find a financially sustainable career, while keeping other categories as broad as possible to allow for self-discovery. As you continue on looking for a career, or carry on with the career you're in, remember the concept of Ikigai as you do so, and try to implement some of the strategies and tips discussed.

ENERGY MANAGEMENT

A blog post from [ENGWellness Blogs](#). (feat. Sam Vandekerckhove)

The introduction

"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." - Albert Einstein

We've all heard of time-management: Prioritizing tasks and allotting time periods to each of them, making a schedule to complete work, organizing what to do and when... this is a concept each of us is familiar with. Time-management can feel empowering at times; writing down tasks and telling yourself when to do them makes you feel like you're on top of everything that you were once overwhelmed by. Unfortunately, life just ain't that easy, and planning out your days hour-by-hour is not realistic. For this reason, time-management won't work for most of us. Even if we can plan out our days in a realistic manner, new tasks, duties, responsibilities, and chores surprise us, and we grow tired and lose the motivation, and the ability, to keep up with our rigorously managed time. We begin to fall behind, and are stuck in a perpetual game of catch up, waiting for each task to approach us instead of us approaching it. Making the 'right' schedule is an impossible game. But there is a strategy that works, a strategy that puts time-management secondary to something even more important than your time; your energy. Energy management is the way to make the most of the time that you've got, not just organize it. So take 'ol Albert's advice and change when the same thing isn't working out. For a full introduction to the topic of energy management, see this article from Harvard Business Review.

Key Takeaways

Time is a finite resource. This means that, as your work tasks pile up, and you attempt to take more on, you lose out on time outside of work, and take time from areas you may not want to, or are even able to. This is where a lot of burnout comes in: people tend to take more on as they go further in school or their career, but they have the same amount of time as they started with, and therefore have to work longer than they did before. Energy, however, is not a finite resource; if managed properly, your energy levels can maximize within the time you have, thereby allowing you to get more done in the same amount of time.

The first big step towards properly managing your time is to focus it. Research has shown, on multiple occasions, that multi-tasking significantly reduces productivity. So, as tempting as it is to have limitless different tabs open, listen to music, answer DMs and emails simultaneously, you're taking a lot less time to do all of it. Managing your energy means using it in an effective manner, and focusing on one task at a time will assist greatly in using your energy in the most effective way possible.

A second key take away has to do with what's called an "Ultradian Rhythm". An Ultradian rhythm is basically a circadian rhythm but within the day, as opposed to between-days like a circadian rhythm. Our energy levels cycle through periods of 90-120 minutes where our energy levels rise and fall. As an effective energy management strategy, we can recognize when we're peaking, and when we're in a trough, and choose what tasks and responsibilities to pay attention to and when.

If you only managed your time, you would not align difficult tasks with your peak energy level rhythms, and easy tasks with your low energy rhythm, and waste your energy, not using it in the most effective way possible.

Lessons from an expert (aka Sam Vandekerckhove)

Don't make the mistake of thinking that you're bound to these pre-set peak periods of energy and productivity either! The beautiful thing about the human condition is that we are adaptable. If you're wanting to get more out of your mornings, you need to adjust your daily habits to complement such an ideal (likewise with evenings or any other time of day). Think of all of the factors that contribute to your available energy in a given day: Caloric intake, nutrition, sleep hygiene, light exposure, various auditory stimuli (music, sounds, noises), environment (bedroom or Gear Lab), the perceived difficulty of the tasks you need to do, chores, social commitments, exercise/physical activity, leisure activities, etc... And that's not even an exhaustive list! The purpose of this statement isn't to intimidate, but rather to illuminate the many options you can explore to adjust your peak energy periods. Modifying what you have for breakfast and when could help stave off a crash before noon (and boosting with lunch can help carry that energy further). Adjusting when you sleep (and improving the quality of that sleep) can make a substantial improvement with how attentive you are for that 8:30AM lecture. Likewise, ensuring a solid bedtime routine (and ritualizing it) can contribute to better shut eye and a more wakeful morning. The list literally goes on and there are perhaps hundreds if not thousands of possibilities you can consider. That being said, when attempting to adjust a status-quo that's been engrained for weeks, months, or even years, the likelihood of sliding back into old and unproductive modes of operation is high. My advice is to start with one thing – whether that's what you're eating, when, when you're sleeping, when you're waking, or where – one thing that you can focus on adjusting to that ideal goal or time. When what you've adjusted is routinized (more or less consistent each day without much effort), move to the next. The slow start helps to ensure that we're not overcommitting ourselves by overhauling too much while giving us confidence that more success can be achieved with continued effort. Embrace your ability to adapt!

Where to Start

Okay, so now you've read a new and (hopefully) interesting strategy to combat your (probably) ineffective habit of trying to manage your time without considering your energy. But what now? As Sam pointed out above, you start with one thing at a time. As with all major habitual changes, trying to do too much at once will likely be overwhelming, and you'll never really make any progress. So instead of trying to jump into this energy management thing head-on, start by picking one factor we've talked about that most appeals to you. Diet change, sleep schedule, bedtime rituals, social commitments are all great places to start, or find one of the many more options to change instead! Take it one step at a time, making your actions very deliberate, focusing on what you want to do and why, and begin to try out this new way of looking at productivity and efficiency.

If you would like to learn more about concepts related to energy management, please check out the links in this article or connect with your Student Wellness Coordinator: ENGWellness@uwaterloo.ca!

Digital Health Week

November 29 - December 5

Digital Health Week is a way for Canadians to bring attention to the success that digital health care is having for everyone, and to celebrate its current successes and where it can bring us.

90% satisfied with the (digital) mental health care they receive.



76% avoided at least one in-person visit to a doctor and/or emergency room, thanks to virtual health care.



72% said virtual health care helped them deal with a moment of crisis/distress that would have resulted in physical harm



With the pandemic came the opportunity for re-inventing the health care wheel. Between lockdowns and COVID restrictions, e-health participation skyrocketed, and the healthcare industry is looking to change for the better.

Saving billions on travel costs, and saving the environment while doing it, moving more medical treatment to remote operation is the future.

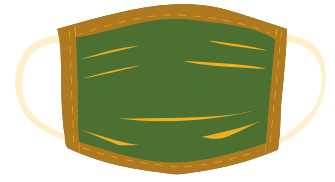
Remote health care not only saves money and the environment, but it also makes it easier for health care professionals to help you. Removing the travel times for both the patient and health care provider, accessibility of health care has never been better. So join in and celebrate Digital Health Week!

What's happening around campus?

COVID-19

Testing Centre

The Health Services COVID-19 Testing Assessment Centre is open to University of Waterloo students, employees, postdocs and their family members who live in the same household. Testing is by appointment only. You can use [this form](#) to book an appointment.



WUSA Student Food Bank Donation Drive

For the month of November, the Faculty of Engineering will be hosting a food & donation drive in support of the WUSA Student Food Bank.

Food & Cash Donations - donations will be accepted in the E7 7th Floor Lobby on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays for the month of November from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Drop off a donation and get a special treat! Electronic Donations - you can use [this link](#) to donate funds online. This link is specifically for the Faculty and your donation counts toward our team goals.

Donations accepted Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:00-3:00 p.m. for the month of November, on the E7 7th Floor Lobby

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence (Nov. 25-Dec. 10)

Organized by a growing group of faculty, staff and students across the University of Waterloo, 16 Days is dedicated to creating actions and events for the elimination of any form of gender-based violence. To learn more, [click here](#).



Student Mental Health Research Conference

SMHRC brings together members of our campus community to share knowledge, connect researchers, and promote mental wellness through presentations and interactive Q&A sessions. Please [register](#) to attend the conference to receive the link to join.



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.

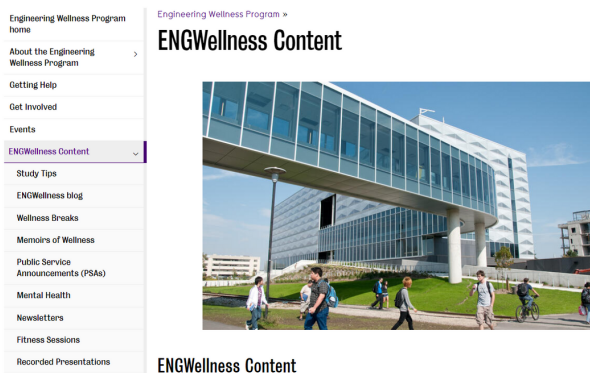
Contacts to book a one-on-one coaching session: (Limited in-person sessions available. Other sessions to be offered virtually.)

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.



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