

Renewal and Rejuvenation

Who can't help but be cheered by the sudden splash of color pushing up through earth that's been barren or overladen with ice and snow through the winter months? Or trees that almost overnight are sending out tiny fresh green shoots and bursting with blooms? Some of us thrive in the cold, while others bask in the heat, but it's hard not to appreciate the onset of Spring with its natural message of hope and renewal.

THE CASE FOR RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION

Vast amounts of research in fields such as neuroscience and psychology consistently demonstrate that when we are under chronic stress, our functioning and quality of life are diminished.

- Cognitive functioning is diminished;
- We become sick more often;
- The big picture perspective can be lost, resulting in poor decisions;
- Both self-awareness and empathy fall by the wayside...and the list goes on.

Mother Nature surely must have been on to something with a cycle that never fails to circle around to Spring to remind us when it's time to take a deep breath, take a step back, and rejuvenate.

STRATEGIES FOR RENEWAL AND REJUVENATION

Practice mindfulness. As a nation of multi-taskers, this can be a tough nut to crack! But it can make all the difference in the quality of our lives and relationships. Simply put, it means to become continually attuned to your mind, body and spirit, born of two components many

of us struggle with: slowing down and being quiet. Carve out a few minutes each day to be alone and get still. Whether it's five minutes as you arise, or a quiet walk in the park later in the day, that time of reflection and solitude can provide a sense of calm as the practice becomes more ingrained.

Discover the power of hope. The sciences also reveal the power of hope in fighting the stresses and pressures of life. The image of a positive and feasible future inspires us, enabling us to dig down, and propelling us forward. So take a moment to imagine your life in 10 years. Where will you be? What will you be doing? What will capture your passion?

Be generous with compassion. Become aware of the needs of others and find ways to support them in achieving their goals. Make someone's day better. Compassion generates positive emotions, which in turn support and promote renewal.

GETTING HELP

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Helping Your Children Find Their Passions

We all thrive when we have hobbies – outlets for our interests, talents, and skills. Children, no less than adults, blossom when they put their energies into pastimes they really enjoy.

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS CAN BENEFIT CHILDREN IN SEVERAL WAYS:

Hobbies increase self-esteem. Hobbies give kids something constructive to do, and build feelings of accomplishment and self-confidence.

They encourage an interest in reading and exploration. Children are naturally curious. Those with hobbies often tend to read and learn more about their interest.

Hobbies encourage goal-setting. Busy kids need to set goals and organize their time. These are critical skills for managing adult responsibilities later.

Interests help keep children out of trouble. Children with productive interests are less likely to get involved with drugs and other risky behaviors.



AS A PARENT, HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILDREN FIND HOBBIES AND DEVELOP PASSIONS?

Really tune into your children. Observe them, think about what they like (and don't like), and whether they are athletic or musical, introverted or extroverted, animal lovers or nature enthusiasts, and so on. Try to follow your children's leads, rather than making assumptions.

Encourage trying different activities. Check out local after school "Y" classes, community programs, youth groups, and online calendars to see the wide variety of activities available. Encourage your children to try things that sound interesting. Become a cheerleader for trying new things. Don't be surprised or discouraged if it takes several attempts before your children identify interests that

truly suit them.

Remember, your children are "one of a kind." Children often feel pressured to fit in with their peers. Fears of being different can sap their own natural creativity, uniqueness, and energies for following their own authentic paths. Be prepared to encourage or nurture their natural tendencies when needed.

This is especially true for children who have learning disabilities and special needs – parents may need to do some additional legwork, offer extra encouragement, and do more fine-tuning to find interests that fit their needs and help them feel good about themselves.

Whatever your children's abilities, keep in mind the importance of focusing on them to learn what they enjoy. Hobbies and interests are healthy outlets for kids' boundless energies and curiosities. They can be rewarding and fulfilling, and sometimes even become passions that lead to satisfying career paths.

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Traveling with Older Adults

Getting ready for a trip with older relatives or friends? You may want to do some special planning, particularly if your travel companions have limitations or disabilities. Here are five areas to consider:

TRANSPORTATION - When traveling by car, plane or train for many hours, mobility may be an issue. Your older travel partner needs opportunities to move about. Sitting too long can create a dangerous medical problem called DVR (deep vein thrombosis). For those who can't easily take a walk, doing simple leg and ankle exercises while seated can help keep the blood circulation flowing. Don't forget to check ahead to ensure handicapped access to boarding zones, aisles, seats, restrooms, steps, and other areas.

FOOD - While many can make do with fast food when traveling, older travelers may be on diabetic, salt-free or other special diets. Consider bringing along a light meal and snacks that fit in with any special nutritional needs. Water must always be available to prevent dehydration.

RESTROOMS - Whatever your mode of travel, ensure that restrooms will be reachable as needed. Check to be sure restrooms have bars, sinks, and toilets that are accessible for people with handicaps. If the restroom does not have these aids, realize it may be necessary to accompany the elder-traveler to the restroom to provide assistance. Discuss this beforehand to be sure everyone is



comfortable with this possibility.

CLOTHING - Weather is unpredictable, and so is the air conditioning and heating on trains and planes. Dress in layers or bring a sweater or jacket so you and your traveling companions can get warmer or cooler as needed. For any overnight travel, bring necessary items so everyone can be comfortable while sleeping.

MEDICATION - Many elders take a number of medications. Carry enough for the entire trip, or make sure there is a pharmacy near your destination. Make sure your elderly travel mate carries extra medication in a travel bag, purse or pocket in the event of any delays which would prevent getting to the luggage.

Before your departure, check in with your elder traveler to identify other needs you may not have considered. The preparations will pay off in making your trip enjoyable, low-stress, and safe for all!

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Getting Your Affairs in Order: Organizing and Renewing Important Documents

Renewal and rejuvenation can also mean taking time to clean out, get organized, and make sure things are up to date. One important area to consider in this light is the state of your legal and financial documents. It's never too soon to gather and organize these materials, and have them reviewed or updated where appropriate. Documents that may need updating include wills, living wills, estate plans, insurance policies and beneficiary designations – to name a few. These papers should reflect your current circumstances as well as your wishes for your affairs should you become incapacitated.

After you compile and review your important papers, decide where you will store them, and let people other than yourself (your spouse, friends, family or children) know where they have been stored. For safest storage, use a locked box that is water- and fire- proof.

Following is a list of several key areas to review to ensure all is up to date and in order, and to identify any gaps.

PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION

- Doctors' names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Up-to-date list of medications and dosages
- Name and phone number of pharmacy

INSURANCE INFORMATION

- Copies of all health insurance cards and policies

- All insurance policies, including: company names, locations policy numbers (life, auto, home, long-term care, and others)

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL INFORMATION

- Bank accounts (including safety deposit boxes)
- Investment information (brokers, account numbers, locations)
 - Mortgages, deeds and titles, including vehicle titles
 - Estate and health plan documents



Organizing your papers will serve you and your family well if you are traveling or become unable to access documents when they are needed. Take advantage of renewed energy and tackle this important task. Doing so will provide a sense of security for you – and your loved ones!

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Thinking Differently About Your Money

Different people view the economic turmoil of recent months as a disaster, a setback, an inconvenience – or an opportunity – depending on their attitudes. Some see our challenged economy as a dare for discovering new solutions that are bigger on creativity, and smaller on cost. Frugal has become the word of the day for many people these days!

Let's focus on the word "frugal" for a moment. It doesn't necessarily signify "lean and mean." People can be frugal simply by being careful and thoughtful as to how they spend their money.

- Frugal may include the decision not to spend money on fads, and possibly even spending a bit extra for purchases that will last. For example, buying clothes with a classic look that never go out of style.
- Frugal may mean a willingness to try less expensive store brands or generic equivalents for food and household items. You may find some to be indistinguishable from name brands, while the quality of others may not be worth the switch.
- Frugal can mean trying your hand at repairing - rather than replacing - things that break, rip, leak, or stop working. As a bonus, you may even learn some new "fix it" skills along the way!

Being frugal is really about lifestyle change, and spending money intentionally out of those values that mean most to you. It's recognizing

contentment can mean a sense of satisfaction with what we have, rather than feeling the need to spend to keep up with the neighbors. It can mean foregoing some of the small things, knowing that saving by not buying a cup of gourmet coffee, or brown bagging it for lunch really does have an impact in the aggregate. It's realizing that finding a good deal is often worth the extra legwork. Being frugal means acknowledging many expenses can be controlled. The payoff is having a little more money leftover for things that really count.



Think about your own spending patterns and talk with others who share your "money pool" with you. Consider ways to live within your means, avoid debt, and save in advance of large purchases. If you can agree on these shifts toward more thoughtful spending, you may achieve a happier attitude toward money and your lifestyle.

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Naturopathic Wellness: The Healing Power of Touch

There are many forms of “alternative” and complementary medical care practiced today. One example is massage therapy, which has been recognized as a healing therapy since ancient times. While researchers are still exploring the scientific reasons, those who receive “hands on” treatments consistently report that massage helps with conditions such as chronic pain, stress, and depression.

There are several types of massage, including:

SWEDISH MASSAGE

Here the massage therapist uses long strokes on the muscles, and moves the joints to promote overall flexibility.

DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE

In deep tissue massage, the therapist works on parts of the body where muscles are tight to relax layers of muscle deep under the skin.

SHIATSU MASSAGE

Finger-pressure massage techniques target traditional acupuncture points to unblock energy flow and restore balance within the body.

PRESSURE POINT MASSAGE

With this form of massage, deep pressure is applied to trigger points – “knots” that can form in the muscles and cause symptoms elsewhere in the body as well.

Other types of massages may include hot stones, mud, aromatherapy, herbal wraps, and more.

Perhaps even more important than the type of massage you get is the qualification of your massage therapist. When planning or scheduling a massage, don’t be shy about asking for your therapist’s training and experience to be sure you will have a beneficial experience. During a massage, it is also important to communicate the level of pressure you prefer.

If the pressure at any point during the massage becomes too intense, be sure to let your therapist know as well. After your massage session, drink plenty of water to help flush out the toxins that have been released during treatment.



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MAY 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Log on and register for this month's featured Webinar: Positive Thinking Packs a Punch National Physical Fitness, Sports, Mental Health, and Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month					1 May Day	2
3	4	5 Cinco de Mayo	6	7	8 Web Focus: Making Mornings Work	9
10 Mother's Day	11 Women's Health Week	12	13 Webinar: Positive Thinking Packs a Punch	14 Webinar: Positive Thinking Packs a Punch	15	16 Armed Forces Day
17	18	19	20	21	22 Web Focus: Benefits of Massage	23
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
31	The professional counselors at Work & Family Benefits can provide information and resources for all of your WorkLife challenges including family care needs, behavioral health problems, legal and financial issues, and overall wellness concerns. Contact us anytime for free, prompt, and confidential assistance. We're always here to help.					



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