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8 DIMENSIONS OF WELL-BEING











OCCUPATIONAL





SPIRITUAL

Well-Being Tips from the Top

CONVERSATION WITH ABIGAIL RUDY, VICE PRESIDENT OF NURSING, ADULT CRITICAL CARE AT HERSHEY MEDICAL CENTER



Can you describe your background and your current role at Penn State Health?

I've been a registered nurse since 2004. I started my career as a graduate nurse in the medical ICU and worked as a staff nurse for four years. After that, I took on a midlevel supervisory role, known as a clinical head nurse,

for another four years. Following this, I became the nurse manager in the MICU, a role I held for five years while also working toward my master's degree. I briefly worked as a liver transplant coordinator before returning to the MICU as nurse manager for an additional five years. In 2017, I stepped into my current position as Vice President of Nursing, and I've been in this role for over seven years now.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your role?

The most rewarding aspect of my role is the problem-solving involved. While no one likes dealing with issues, challenges are inevitable, and I enjoy being part of the solution. I listen to different perspectives, gather feedback, and work to incorporate those viewpoints to create better solutions. Understanding the several factors that contribute to problems is key, and as a leader, I have the unique responsibility to

really take in what people are saying.

In healthcare, things are constantly changing-whether it's patients or the way we deliver care—so it's crucial to recognize that once you step away from bedside care, you're no longer the expert on every issue. Instead, you become the person who knows who the content experts are and can bring them together to help solve problems. I find great satisfaction in facilitating that process and empowering others to be part of solving their own challenges.

What was your biggest motivator to enter this career

My biggest motivator to pursue a career in nursing was my mom. She was a nurse at a time when nurses did it allcaring for different types of patients and learning a wide range of skills. What really stood out to me was that she never complained about being a nurse. She was always so positive about her work, and now, looking back, I realize how rare that is. It's not common for people to talk about their job without some level of dissatisfaction, but she genuinely found joy in what she did.

Growing up on a farm also played a role. It sparked my interest in science, health, and nature, which shaped my career choice. That combination of my mom's influence and the environment I grew up in definitely pushed me toward

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

BeWell Commitment Statement:

Penn State Health's mission is to continually improve the health and well-being of the people of Pennsylvania, and beyond. To achieve this mission, we must support and empower our employees to be well by offering inclusive and engaging benefits. The Penn State Health BeWell program aims to foster a culture of well-being across the health system that supports and empowers employees, in all dimensions,

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

What do you like to do to maintain your own well-being and stay healthy?

Maintaining my well-being is something I've been actively learning and working on. Over the past year, my main focus has been managing my own expectations and not being so hard on myself. As a mom with a busy career, it's easy to place high demands on myself and those around me, but I've been learning to give myself grace. This has been a major shift for me—realizing that it's okay to not always have everything perfect.

I'm also at a stage in life where my kids are growing up fast. Five years ago, they were little, and in another five years, they'll both be close to graduating and potentially moved out. That realization has made me really value time with my family and relationships even more. It's a reminder that time is limited, and focusing on the moments that matter is critical.

Physically, I enjoy staying active. I love my Peloton treadmill—it's been an incredible fitness tool for me. I also appreciate the Peloton benefit we have through Penn State Health. But, overall, my biggest shift in well-being has been focusing more on my mental health, learning to recognize that it's okay to not always push through every challenge alone, and being more kind to myself.

How do you encourage your employees or hospital staff to take care of their own mental well-being?

When it comes to encouraging staff to take care of their mental well-being, I focus on recognizing that well-being is not a one-size-fits-all approach. There are so many factors that can influence someone's mental health, and those factors can change depending on where they are in life. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, the birth of a child, professional accomplishments, or financial stress, various stages of life bring different challenges. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on mental health for many people.

In nursing, the workplace is particularly challenging, with demanding patient care and evolving patient needs. I've always been a big proponent of encouraging people to take time for themselves when they need it. Often, we think of self-care as taking a week-long vacation, but sometimes what we really need is a day or two after a difficult situation—whether it's something challenging at home or at work. We tend to push ourselves constantly, but I believe in the value of taking a step back, resetting, and then returning to being the best version of yourself.

I also promote the idea of replacing anxious thoughts with gratitude. This is something I've been focusing on personally and encouraging in others. It's a simple strategy that can help manage anxiety in the moment without requiring a lot of external resources. Shifting your mindset to focus on what you're grateful for can make a significant difference in how you cope with day-to-day challenges.

What do you hope for the future of well-being at Penn State Health as a whole?

For the future of well-being at Penn State Health, I hope to see continued growth and expansion of the initiatives we have in place. As part of the system-wide Wellness Advisory team, I'm grateful for the opportunity to help share and align efforts across

different areas. This cross-sharing of information will be key to ensuring we're all moving in the right direction

The workplace, especially in healthcare, is incredibly challenging, so we need to keep providing the right resources for our staff's well-being. But more than just offering solutions, I believe we need to listen to what staff are saying about their own needs. It's essential that we approach well-being by asking what will truly help them perform their jobs to the best of their abilities, rather than advising what we think they need. Listening and responding to their perspectives is the most important aspect of future well-being efforts. I believe Penn State Health does very well promoting exercise and other be-well initiatives, which have proven to be helpful. Leadership is also very committed to addressing staff shortages, which causes additional stress for our employees.

Is there anything else that you want to add?

I strongly believe that well-being is everyone's responsibility. We all face different stressors, and our needs can change over time across the eight dimensions of well-being. That's why the strategies we use to support well-being have to evolve as well—it's not something we can set and forget. One of the most underutilized strategies is how we support each other in the moment.

We often think we need big changes to improve our well-being, but the everyday support from colleagues and loved ones can make the biggest impact. Those relationships help us get through challenges, and I wouldn't underestimate their role in maintaining well-being.

By Caitlin Byerly, a former Project Coordinator with Penn State PRO Wellness. She facilitated components of the BeWell employee well-being initiative for Penn State Health Human Resources.

Upcoming Events





Lunch & Learns:

Nutrition and Your Health Presenter: Chris Rich

Feb. 17, 2025 | Noon - 1 p.m <u>REGISTER HERE</u>

It's possible to make a few small changes to your diet that can have a significant impact on your health. Some education and simple planning can help anyone build a healthier diet that fits their lifestyle. Attendees will understand the role that a healthy diet plays in every facet of their life, and gain tips for building a healthier diet and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Sleep Basics

Presenter: Dr. Tami West

Mar. 12, 2025 | Noon - 1 p.m REGISTER HERE

In this presentation, you will learn the physical and mental benefits of good sleep, how to establish daily habits that promote sleep and ways to improve your sleep environment. We will also discuss techniques for relaxation and dealing with insomnia.

BeRested Challenge

The BeRested Challenge is a free, system-wide, month-long sleep challenge for Penn State Health employees, running March 1-31, 2025.

Participating individuals are encouraged to engage in daily activities to help improve sleep hygiene over the 31 days in March.

To join the BeRested challenge, register here.

Registration will close at 11:59pm on Thursday, Feb. 27th.

Emotional Well-being Self-Love on Valentine's Day





Whether you're spending Valentine's Day with a partner, friends, pets, or by yourself, love for yourself is equally as important as your love for others.

You might see or hear Valentine's Day messages about being in a relationship or persuading you to buy gifts for that special someone, but what about taking care of you?

Try a few of these simple ways to treat yourself on Valentine's and give yourself the affection you deserve.

- Do something that makes you happy. Spend time reading a good book, watching the sunset or engaging in a favorite hobby. Loving yourself comes from within, so start by adding positivity to your day.
- Cook or go out to dinner. You don't need an excuse to splurge a little on dinner! Whether you prefer to cook or go out to eat, putting a little extra effort into your meal can help you feel special and good about yourself.
- Buy or make yourself a gift. The most important person in your life is you, so treat yourself to a Valentine's present to show yourself a little love.

- Relax and recharge. Take some time for yourself to enjoy a nap, massage or a nice bubble bath. Relaxing, getting good sleep and taking care of your mind and body can boost your mood, especially if your Valentine's Day feels difficult.
- Celebrate your wins and practice positive affirmations. Whether big or small, acknowledging your successes and positive attributes can help you recognize your worth. Be kind to yourself and know that just being you is enough.

Feeling down on Valentine's? If you need support and guidance to help you through today's challenges, reach out to your mental health provider or employee assistance program.

Source: https://www.wellbeing.place/home/2022/2/14/self-love-on-valentines-day

Wellbeing Place provides you with a wide array of tips, resources, recipes, tools and ideas that will help you improve your overall health and wellbeing. To navigate the site, click the menu icon in the upper-left corner and select a category – or just page down and check out topics of interest to you.

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Emotional Well-being Seasonal Affective Disorder





Research has indicated that individuals susceptible to SAD may have reduced activity of serotonin, the brain chemical which helps regulate mood. Sunlight controls the levels of molecules that help maintain normal serotonin levels, but in people with SAD, research suggests this regulation does not function properly, resulting in decreased serotonin levels in the winter.

- Managing symptoms. When seasons change, those with SAD
 often experience fatigue and social withdrawal. If you or someone
 you know has SAD, stay proactive about your mental health and
 follow some of these tips to combat symptoms.
- Use light therapy. Light therapy attempts to mimic natural sunlight to keep your circadian rhythm on track. A decrease in sunlight in winter can disrupt these rhythms and cause sleep disturbances. Sitting in front of a lightbox or moving your desk by a window can boost your mood.
- Stay active. Getting your heart rate up and moving your body increases an array of "feel-good" brain chemicals while remaining sedentary and indoors often exacerbates depression. Take a run, go for a walk or try a new sport to improve energy levels.

- Stick to a routine. You might feel the urge to withdraw from activities and sleep more often. Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps you feel refreshed.
- Supplement vitamin D. Lack of sun exposure in the winter can lead to a vitamin D deficiency one risk factor for depression. Taking a supplement might relieve symptoms, but always consult with your doctor first.
- Speak with a therapist. You don't have to work through your challenges alone. A mental health professional can help treat SAD and develop the best plan for your mental health needs.

Seasonal Affective Disorder can be challenging to navigate, but you don't need to handle it alone. If you need further assistance, SupportLinc Care Advocates are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at no cost to you.

Call 888-881-5462 for in-the-moment support, guidance and additional resources.

Source: SupportLinc - Seasonal Affective Disorder

Social Well-being Overcoming Loneliness





Connecting and socializing with others is an essential part of the human experience. However, everyone experiences feelings of loneliness from time to time. Even though you might have friends and family, you may still feel isolated, empty or abandoned.

Research suggests that prolonged loneliness can be detrimental to mental and physical health. When you lack connection and companionship, you can feel more depressed, have trouble sleeping and get sick more frequently. Luckily, you can prevent and overcome loneliness. Equipping yourself with the knowledge, tools and resources provided in this toolkit is the first step toward boosting connection.



Financial Well-being

Resolve to Raise Your Retirement Savings

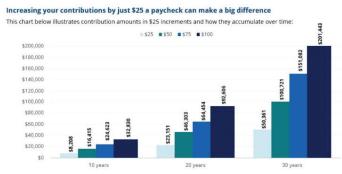




If you're sticking to your New Year's resolutions, you deserve a pat on the back. According to one survey it takes an average of just 32 days before people give up on a resolution — and 68% of people say they give up on their resolutions even earlier than that. Why is it so hard to stick to a resolution?

One reason could be that we try to do too much too fast, which makes it easier to fail. When you set realistic goals that are easier to achieve, you may be less likely to give up. Saving for retirement is a great example. If you resolve to save a little more with each paycheck, you may not feel a drastic change in your take-home pay — but you could see a big impact on your future retirement income.

Take a quick look at the scenario depicted in the chart below. It shows



FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY. This is a hypothetical illustration to show the value of an increase in contributions. This hypothetical illustration assumes a 6% average annual rate of return. 24 pay parlods, and reinvestment of earnings with no withdrawais. Rates of return may vary. This illustration does not include any charges, expenses or fees that may be associated with your plan. The tax-

how increasing your contribution from each paycheck by just \$25 could help you build the saving momentum that translates into a more comfortable retirement. Think of it this way: The thought of saving \$20,000, \$30,000, or \$50,000 more can be overwhelming. It might even sound too difficult to try. But saving an extra \$25 every paycheck probably seems a lot easier. And when you contribute more to your account on a regular basis, you also get the added effect of compound growth potential. That's where any earnings that your contributions generate get reinvested in your chosen investment options, where they can generate additional growth of their own.

One final point: Your retirement plan also makes saving automatic. When you increase your contribution, the money goes directly from your paycheck into your account. You don't have to do anything extra. How many other good habits are as easy to follow through on?

Ready to make good on your resolution to improve your retirement readiness? Log in to your myretirement Plan account at retire. pennstatehealth.org today to increase your contribution amount (and consider automatic annual increases).

Source: Empower

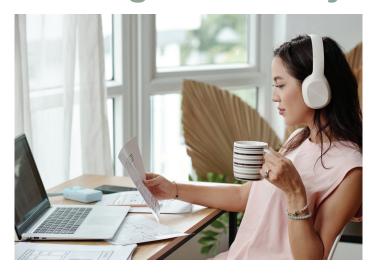
1: New York Post "The average American abandons their New Year's Resolution by this date," January 28, 2020, https://nypost.com/2020/01/28/the-average-american-abandons-their-new-years-resolution-by-this-date



Occupational Well-being

Boosting Productivity at Work





Here are a few ways for you and your team to increase productivity at work:

- List your "crucial results" for the day. Crucial results are the
 list of objectives that absolutely need to be accomplished to move
 forward with projects and goals. Create a spreadsheet listing your
 top 3 crucial results for each day. This will help you plan each
 - day and make sure you're maintaining focus on the most important tasks.
- Eat healthy foods. The food we eat throughout the day is extremely important in boosting our brain power and how productive we are. Junk food affects your weight and causes decreased



productivity and energy crashes. If your office doesn't provide healthy snacks, bring your own to stash in your desk and keep you fueled.

- Complete tasks in batches. Batch your activities instead of breaking them up into small chunks. It takes time to get into a rhythm with whatever you're working on, so if you constantly start and stop that process, you're wasting time getting back into your rhythm or catching up where you left off. Some ways you can incorporate this idea into the workday set a block of time to knock out all of your data entry or reporting tasks instead of spreading them out, set meetings with colleagues back to back in the afternoon, work in 90-minute increments, or answer voicemails or emails for a chunk of time in the afternoon.
- Use the 2-minute rule (successfully). After getting your to-do list in order, you will find that some tasks are small and can probably be done in a couple of minutes. Do them! Obviously,

don't get bogged down by these small tasks or let them derail you by taking more time than they should. Take them at face value and knock them out when you can.

• **Get moving.** Exercise is important for the body and mind. It reduces stress hormones while increasing growth factors in the

brain that are necessary for new neuronal connections. Whether you prefer exercising in the morning, after work, during lunch or small breaks throughout the day, you will notice the impact it has on your energy, mood and productivity.



 Stand more. Feeling sleepy around 3pm? Stand up! Having trouble staying focused? Stand up! While standing doesn't

burn a significant amount of calories more than sitting, it can help diminish other health risks like shoulder and back pain, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and premature death. When working in the recommended 90-minute intervals, stand up near the end of that time when you might start to lose focus.

- Read in the morning. Most people don't wake up super energized and feel instantly inspired to take on the day. To get in the right mindset to be productive at work, read for about 15-30 minutes before starting your day. Books on business, psychology, behavioral economics and personal development may particularly boost creativity and inspiration for the day.
- Wear headphones. Working in a high collaborative environment can mean that people come up to you with questions throughout the day, throwing you off your rhythm. Wearing headphones is a simple trick that can ward off questions that are either too menial or too complex to be answered in a quick face-to-face interaction. Your colleagues will question whether what they needed to discuss is worth the disturbance. The best part? You don't even have to be listening to music!
- Give yourself less time than you think you'll need. However long you think it will take you to complete a project or task, give yourself less time to complete it. You'll find that giving yourself a deadline will keep you more focused to get the job done.

Source: Boosting Productivity At Work — Wellbeing Place

Wellbeing Place provides you with a wide array of tips, resources, recipes, tools and ideas that will help you improve your overall health and wellbeing. To navigate the site, click the menu icon in the upper-left corner and select a category — or just page down and check out topics of interest to you.

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Physical, Emotional Well-being The Medical Minute

Heart, Mind - A Profound Connection

It's a vicious cycle and a common one.

When dealing with a health issue, specifically something serious such as a heart condition, physical well-being isn't the only thing in jeopardy.

It's natural to worry about the future, but too much worry can cause a mental strain. Anxiety or depression can set in, and lack of personal motivation as well as medication to treat those conditions can have a negative effect on energy levels. Those patients could become more sedentary and less apt to do what's needed to improve heart health.

So, the connection between mental and heart health goes both ways. Heart problems can make you worry, and worry can ultimately lead to heart problems.

"It is actually quite substantial," said Dr. Safwat Gassis, Penn State Heart and Vascular Institute's director of cardiac electrophysiology and its atrial fibrillation clinic. "There is a very strong association in both directions. Many different types of mental health conditions can either mimic or exacerbate heart problems and vice versa. People with heart conditions can profoundly exacerbate mental conditions, whether that is anxiety or depression or paranoia."

Confusing Symptoms

One of the keys to maintaining a healthy heart and mind is possessing a strong knowledge base of symptoms, conditions and medical histories. To build that database, Gassis said, it is important to engage in dialogue with medical professionals to best understand what is happening to you and why and what the treatment should be, including what side effects certain medicines may trigger.



The tricky part is that symptoms of certain heart issues – such as palpitations or arrhythmia – can be similar to mental health issues like anxiety or panic attacks. Therefore, patients may confuse one for another, potentially making a situation worse. For instance, a benign heart-rhythm issue such as extra or premature heartbeats can be mistaken for something more serious, which can ramp up one's anxiety and cause adrenaline (the fight or flight hormone) release in the blood, which then can speed the heartbeat and continue the circle.

"When a person has a heart arrhythmia, a heart rate can be rapid or irregular. That's caused by let's say a short circuit in the heart itself. But what they feel is this pounding, shortness of breath, dizziness and light-headedness and tingling, which are identical symptoms to a panic attack," Gassis said. "I've seen this many, many times where a heart condition is confused for panic attacks or anxiety and vice versa, where a person may think they have a heart rhythm issue where it's actually symptoms of anxiety."

When to Seek Help

The first thing you should do, Gassis said, is determine the severity of the symptoms. If your heartbeat is accelerating and you own a blood pressure cuff or have another way to monitor heart rate or other vitals, do so as soon as possible. That will provide context.







More severe symptoms, such as acute chest pain or major difficulty breathing, should be viewed as an emergency and help should be sought immediately.

"If somebody is feeling like they are gasping for air, are really short of breath and are having chest pains, and those symptoms are severe, then it is best to get it checked out right away," he said. "So, the severity of the symptoms dictates that. Not all palpitations, feeling a little fluttering, requires somebody to drop what they are doing and go get checked out right away."

If you experience heart fluttering or other palpitations without pain while lying down at night, for instance, stay calm and make note of what is happening and if there are any patterns. Then take that information to a physician to determine the root issue – and whether it's heart- or mental-health related or both.

Proper evaluation, Gassis said, is important because it can lead to peace of mind. Oftentimes, patients who are dealing with irregular heartbeats – and the subsequent anxiety that is associated with them – will be prescribed monitors to wear for days or weeks so that patterns can be determined. Once the results are studied, doctors form a better understanding of what is happening and how best to treat the symptoms.

Having that knowledge and a treatment plan in place can go a long way to easing concerns. That's why Gassis said, it can be "extremely beneficial" to address mental health and heart health issues simultaneously.

Source: <u>Heart, mind – a profound connection - Penn State Health News</u>

The Medical Minute is a weekly health news feature produced by Penn State Health. Articles feature the expertise of faculty, physicians and staff, and are designed to offer timely, relevant health information of interest to a broad audience.

Recipes

111

Valentine Egg in a Hole

Give eggs and toast a fun twist with this easy Egg in a Hole recipe. All you need is a heart-shaped cookie cutter. Use the toast heart cutouts to dip in the yummy yolk.

Serves: 4 | Time: 20 minutes Diabetic, Heart Healthy

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 slices whole wheat bread or multigrain bread
- 2 Tbsp butter, melted
- 4 eggs

- 1/8 tsp salt
- Black pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

- 1. Set the broiler to low. With a 2 1/2-inch heart-shaped cookie cutter, cut a heart from the center of each bread slice.
- Brush the melted butter on both sides of the bread slices and cutouts, including the inside of the hole.
- In a large ovenproof nonstick skillet over medium-low heat, toast the bottoms of the slices and cutouts of bread until

golden. Flip the bread. Crack an egg into each hole.

4. Cover and cook until eggs set, about 1 1/2 minutes. Place the skillet under the broiler just until the egg whites are fully cooked, about 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately, with the toast hearts on the side for dipping.



Recipe Source: Click Here

NUTRITION:

Serving size: 1 slice toast, 1 egg Calories: 241 Fat: 14g Saturated Fat: 5g Cholesterol: 202mg Sodium: 371mg Carbohydrates: 18g Fiber: 2g Protein: 10g

Black Bean Fudge Brownies

No one will ever guess the secret ingredient that makes these fudge brownies extra fudgy—black beans. These black bean brownies are a decadent gluten free dessert that everyone will love.

Serves: 12 | Time: 45 minutes Gluten Free



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 Tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/2 cup quick oats (gluten free if needed)
- 1/4 tsp sal
- 1/2 cup pure maple syrup or honey
- 1/4 cup coconut or vegetable oil
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips

PREPARATION:

- 1. Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly coat an 8 x 8-inch baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- In a food processor, combine all ingredients except the chocolate chips and blend until completely smooth. Stir in the chocolate chips.
- Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 25 minutes.
- Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Do not cut brownies until completely cooled.

NUTRITION:

Serving size: 1 brownie Calories: 148 Fat: 6g Saturated Fat: 5g Cholesterol: 0mg Sodium: 12mg Carbohydrates: 20g Fiber: 3g Protein: 2g

Recipe Source: Click Here



WeightWatchers®

11-11

Find the WeightWatchers® program that fits your life

Your weight-health journey isn't one-size-fits all. That's why WeightWatchers now offers tailored programs that give you the tools and support you need to meet your unique goals. You also get special pricing through Penn State Health at WW.com/PennStateHealth.

- Points® Program: Customized food plan, expert nutrition guidance, 12,000+ recipes, 200+ ZeroPoint® foods, the easy-to-use WW app, and always-on support.
- Diabetes Program: Tailored recipes and support to help you lose weight and lower blood sugar.** And you can sync the WW app with select CGMs.
- NEW! GLP-1 Program: Nutrition and activity targets that help you
 feel your best if your doctor has prescribed weight-management
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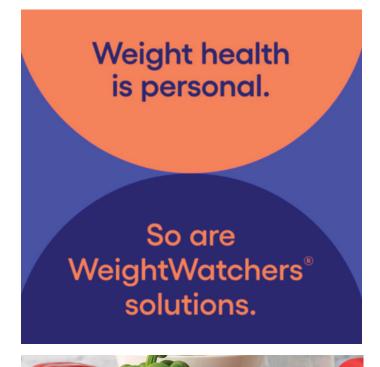
Click here to sign up or learn more!

**Pricing reflects the cost for WWs Core membership plan through your organization. Monthly payment required in advance. You'll be automatically charged each month in accordance with company pricing until you cancel. Pricing may adjust to the standard monthly rate if your relationship with your organization changes or terminates, or the agreement between your organization and WW terminates.

**Based on a 6-month multicenter trial. Apolzan JW et al. A Scalable, Virtual Weight Management Program Tailored for Adults with Type 2 Diabetes: Effects on Glycemic Control. Nutrition & Diabetes. 2023. Funded by WW International, Inc.

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Peloton



Sign up for Peloton today!

Penn State Health and Peloton have partnered to provide you with preferred pricing on Peloton Memberships and equipment, empowering you to reach all your well-being goals.

With the Peloton App, get access to motivating live and on-demand fitness and mindfulness classes to suit any mood, motivation style, experience level, music taste, and schedule—no equipment required. Ready to take your Peloton journey to the next level? Apply your Peloton benefit and receive preferred pricing on the Peloton Bike, Bike+, Tread+, Row, and Guide.

Whether you're interested in low impact cardio, bodyweight strength, or yoga and meditation, we've got you covered. Don't forget to check out our newly curated Collective Calm and find your calm with this collection of classes meant to help you navigate stress and find inner peace with your community.

Start the summer season off strong with Peloton! <u>Click here to access your Peloton benefit</u> and remember, you can add the #LionStrong tag to connect with other Penn State Health employees throughout your Peloton well-being journey.

