Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico

WASH NM

January 2022

An offering to New Mexicans from the faculty and students of the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education at the University of New Mexico

Photo by Deborah Luffey
Fresh Starts and New Beginnings

“A fresh start is not a new place, it’s a new mindset”- anonymous

New year, fresh start. Another birthday, a renewed beginning. A new day, new strength. Make every moment count... There are so many ways to think of new beginnings and fresh starts. It’s a frame of mind and not just a time of year: January 1. Culturally we like to have the first of the year be the time to change habits and update old ones. We reflect on the year before and work to make this next year better than the ones before. May this year be one of grace for yourself and others as we seek to make changes, and may we rest in the peace of knowing that every moment can be (is!) a new beginning.
Simple Pleasures
These are our latest finds for relatively quick, easy, often healthy, things you can do during COVID-19 restrictions.

Using “Energy Generators” to Get Unstuck
By Jan Armstrong, Faculty - Educational Psychology

Most people from time to time get stuck – unable to move forward or to make progress toward goals, despite wanting to do so. Experts have identified a number of ways to account for the phenomenon, and there seem to be as many strategies for getting unstuck as there are ways to get stuck in the first place! One of my favorite tactics for shifting into gear when stalled is to take a few minutes to visualize activities that I am already motivated to do. I call these “energy generators,” because they seem to bring with them enough positive energy to brighten my day and motivate me to tackle tasks I have been avoiding. My folk theory about this is that engaging in this process offers a way to get free of negative forces that hold me back by identifying what psychologists call approach goals. My process is simple: I write an entry in my journal and title it “I could get excited about...” or “I could feel charged up about...” and then see what activities come to mind. Last January, 2021, my list read like a poem:

Energy Generators:

Walking across natural terrain
Or around the block
Or anywhere beyond my cage

Making
Gardens
Healthy meals
Delectable baked good
Streamlined spaces
Cozy places
  Articulate sentences
  Captivating arguments
  New Friends

Being
Productive
Useful
Loving
  Patient
  Caring
  Interested
  Tolerant
  Generative
Nurturing wisdom and well being
A month later, in February, 2021, my “I could get charged up about” list included
1. sewing the raveling edges of a pillow case
2. walking in the windswept sunshine
3. connecting with friends
4. doing work worth doing and figuring out what that is
5. going for a drive, anywhere

These are simple things to look forward to doing after more critical and time-sensitive tasks are completed. They are not reinforcers in the behavioral sense, but are perhaps virtual rewards or tokens that engender hope. It is fine to create multiple lists of energy generators over time, and wise to reflect on what you can learn from them. Doing so might afford new insights into what you value, things you need to take more time to do, and opportunities for growth.

**Selected Resources for Getting Unstuck**
Brower, Tracy (2021). Feeling stuck? Here’s how to get unstuck and move ahead.

Brower focuses on career and workplace situations, drawing on the Oracle and Workplace Intelligence Study to help make her case.

Dangor, Graison (2022). When facing loss, embrace change and don’t force closure, a therapist urges.

Harteneck, Patricia (2016). 7 ways to get yourself unstuck.

Mohr, Tara Sophia. (nd) 16 ways to get unstuck.

VIDEOS:
“Singh explores what it feels like to be stuck, and why paying greater attention to this experience is often the crucial first step towards successful change.” He argues that “It is more important to get unstuck than to feel better.”

“In this talk, Oudai shares his story, especially how some key moments in his life shaped his belief and motivations. With his personal story, he hopes to inspire you to follow your goals undeterred by the difficulties you may face.” (17:09)

“In this talk, Nic unravels the surprising and perplexing motivational dynamics underlying our procrastination that lead so often to disengagement and burnout. Illustrated with examples drawn from two decades of coaching students, he introduces self-worth theory of motivation, a powerful research-based conceptual framework for understanding and overcoming procrastination, avoidance, and over-commitment.” (21:26)
January is the start of a new year, a fresh beginning on the calendar. For many, this is a great time to craft a resolution to transition from the old to the new, bringing forth something better and improved. This is the time of the year when most of us contemplate changes in our lifestyle, including diet and exercise. According to a Statista poll, 50% of Americans want to increase their exercise or improve their fitness while 48% want to lose weight.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 17% of Americans are on a special diet, up from 14% a decade ago. The most common diet followed was a weight loss or

By Deborah Luffey, RDN, Faculty - Nutrition and Dietetics
low-calorie diet, which was true across all age groups. Why is dieting a concern? Diets, for most of us, are seen as a temporary strategy for achieving a goal. While achieving a certain weight is an accomplishment, implementing and sustaining a healthier diet would provide long-term health benefits that would last a lifetime. For example, lowering salt intake can lower blood pressure, leading to improved cardiovascular health, while increasing fiber intake can lower the risk of certain cancers. A healthful diet also helps sustain our nutritional status and improves mood and energy levels.

While we desire to make changes that improve our health and wellbeing, implementing these can be challenging. How can we make changes in our diet that will last? If we are just thinking about a change, but aren’t ready to implement it, we will not be successful. We have to think about making changes in our diet, plan how we will implement those, and then commit to the change by creating new routines to make it permanent.

Optimally, dietary changes start small and are sustained. Instead of increasing fiber and lowering salt and decreasing calories, choose one area on which to focus. Plan your diet around the goal you set. If you want to increase your fiber intake, for example, explore foods that are high in fiber. Next, plan your menus to include more high-fiber foods and add these to your grocery list. When planning your day, remember to include these items in your lunch or as a snack. Want to be even more successful? Set goals with partner to keep each other accountable. It is also helpful to keep track of your progress—a food diary or an app, like MyFitnessPal, help show the progress you made in meeting your goal.

You know you want to improve your diet and now have a few ideas on how to implement the changes. Where should you start? U.S. Dietary data shows that the average American diet is low in fruit, vegetables, and fiber, so adding any of these would be beneficial for most of us. Some other ideas: eating a more plant-based diet, decreasing red meat intake, decreasing added sugar or increasing water intake would all benefit overall health. Remember, improving your diet, like changing anything else, takes planning and commitment, but the health benefits are immeasurable.

To explore more:

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Setting Lifestyle Goals

USDA: MyPlate Recipes

Switching to a more plant-based diet

Increasing fiber intake

Health benefits of lowering salt intake
Coping Skills

Self Compassion in 2022

By Ashley Martin-Cullar, Faculty - Family and Child Studies

Dr. Kristin Neff, self-compassion researcher and self-grace encourager, invites us all to look at ourselves with understanding and compassion. As we enter 2022 with a difficult first few months ahead of us as COVID numbers rise, remind yourself to have self-grace amid navigating the stress and strain of this new year. Traditionally the new year is a time for self-reflection and new shifts that come in the form of resolutions. Resolutions can be motivators and can ground us in our hopes and desires for the new year. Resolutions can also mean unmet expectations and discouragement when we are unable to meet them.

There are 3 components to self-compassion: self-kindness, recognizing our shared humanity, and mindfulness. Self-kindness is a gentle approach to navigating our relationship with ourselves. Most things we say to ourselves we would never say to someone else struggling. We are encouragers to others; however, we leave the hurtful and disparaging comments for ourselves. Recognizing our shared humanity is a beautiful way of looking at life. We all experience hardships. We all struggle. When we realize that we are all in this life together just trying to figure it out, we can feel a larger and more profound connection to others and ourselves. Mindfulness is the ability to be present in the moment with non-judgement. For self-compassion this means that when we feel an emotion, we allow ourselves to feel in in the present moment, honor the emotion, and not judge ourselves for having the emotion.

For self-compassion: Instead of harsh and critical self-feedback try to offer yourself kindness, “today was a hard day, just rest today. You worked really hard and deserve _____.”

Recognizing our shared humanity: Instead of isolating yourself with thoughts of being alone in the emotion/feeling/situation, try to remind yourself of the shared human experience. This is not to minimize what you are going through and is not a comparison, but a time to reflect that humans make mistakes, humans have a variety of emotions, humans react in ways they don’t intend sometimes... we are human, and we share the experience of being human with other humans.

Mindfulness: Instead of judging your emotion(s), try to honor what you are feeling and allow yourself to be with whatever emotion is in the moment. Try not to say harsh things about your emotions (i.e., Why do I always cry? Why does that make me so mad? Or telling yourself to just move on, don’t let it affect me...). Try to tell yourself, “It’s okay to be upset.” “it’s okay to be sad.” or “it makes sense that I would feel _____. “
Here are some resources for learning self-compassion:

The Transformative Effects of Mindful Self-Compassion

Kristin Neff’s website

She has specific exercises and guided practices to help engage in self-compassion

The Space Between Self-Esteem and Self Compassion: Kristin Neff

Cultivating Unconditional Self-Worth: Adia Gooden
The last two years have been a bit overwhelming and unsettling at times. Yet, I am hopeful as we come into 2022. I have always thought of the new year as a “fresh start.” A time to reflect, dream, set goals, and set intentions. For many of us, we realize that family, self-care, and giving gratitude for the people and blessings in our lives help us keep pushing through life with a sense of purpose and passion.

In the Greater Good Science Center Magazine, Finding your purpose, they explain, “According to Psychologists, purpose is an intention to achieve a long-term goal that is personally meaningful and contributes something to the world. When we pursue a sense of purpose, four things may be in play: dedicated commitment, personal meaningfulness, goal-directedness, and a vision larger than ourselves”. When we pursue our purpose personally and professionally, we will be more fulfilled and share our light with others. Setting this example for children is extremely important.

Children can also have goals and find their passion and purpose when pursued. One idea is to hang up a calendar where your child can see it daily. Then, add activities that activate their joy and passion. Spending time doing the things we love will also help us manage stress and uncertainty. Here are some questions to have with your child that might help prompt this conversation.

1. What makes you happy?
2. What are your favorite activities to do?
3. What would you like to do this month?

Being more intentional with our schedule and life activities will help us succeed this year. Being flexible and open to unexpected changes will allow us to stay positive and move forward. Planning time for rest is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves. Stop doing it if planning your entire day in a calendar brings on anxiety. If not having a structure in your day brings anxiety, start writing things down to ensure your day.

Practicing mindfulness is a beautiful way to start your day with gratitude and has many benefits. I started practicing more intentionally a few years ago, and it has been life-changing. I do not think I could have made it through the last couple of years without practicing mindfulness and gratitude. My children and I all practice mindfulness, and we can all handle life’s ups and downs more productively. When you take the time to breathe, stretch, meditate, and practice mindfulness in your own way, you will feel ready to face the day in a relaxed and more positive manner. In addition, you will be able to handle more stressful situations calmly and appropriately.
How Can I get started with mindfulness?

1. Download an app to your phone. For example: Insight Timer

2. Commit to practicing mindfulness for at least two minutes a day.

3. Journal what you are grateful for in your life.

4. Journal what brings you purpose and joy in your life.

Just remember to find joy in the little things. Keep pursuing your passion and purpose in meaningful ways. Rest and give yourself grace during this time. We are all in this together, and 2022 will be refreshing and fulfilling.
And just like that, the Holidays are over and, as a community, we are back! It is so exciting to start a new semester, full of new experiences as well as new opportunities to become better in whatever we set our minds to. I always view a new semester like a fresh canvas; a blank space, waiting to be drawn on, where the artist can express what they want, whilst also having the ability to modify and better their painting as they go. The beauty of a new semester is the endless amount of possibilities that could come from having the correct mindset towards new situations that arise along the way. Apart from having the correct mindset, it is important to find the motivation to complete our tasks whilst also acknowledging our self-efficacy. The real question regards two things: What type of mindset should we have and where do we find the motivation to become better every single day? Many struggle with this issue because it becomes hard at times to find the motivation to do something in particular, to trust our self-efficacy in order to complete a task and have the proper mindset throughout. I really do hope that after reading this, every single person feels more motivated, more self-efficacious and more prepared to finish and accomplish what they set out to do!

I must admit that in the past two years, whilst living through this Pandemic, I have encountered many moments that I have lacked the motivation or the proper mindset to complete a task. As time has passed, I have learned to become better at organizing myself, set and properly establish priorities, and most importantly, believe in myself and my capabilities in order to become better in whatever I set my mind to. In order to do all of these things, I had to understand the root and influence towards my motivation and the importance of a proper mindset towards whatever life offers. Before I continue, I find it really necessary to offer the definition of mindset, more specifically growth mindset, since it is so incredibly influential for individuals who want to become better, grow and evolve into the best version of themselves with time. Explained along a writing by the website: Psychology Today, where Stanford Psychologist, Carol Dweck, and her colleagues, offer an amazing definition to growth mindset, which pertains to the openness to experience and ability that individuals possess for their capacities to become better. Ultimately, this definition helps to understand why mindset as a whole is so important to become better in our everyday life. The secret lies in believing in ourselves, believing in our capabilities, and trusting that we will reach our goals, if we set ourselves up for success. Also, it is important to mention how we should acknowledge the fact that we don’t know everything, that we learn new things every single day and that with new experiences, come new life teachings, which will serve us knowledge and wisdom for the future. Now, another issue comes to mind: how do we tackle life encounters that require us to utilize our abilities to succeed?
This past semester (Fall 2021) I formed part of an awesome and incredibly instructive course taught by the amazing Dr. Terri Flowerday regarding Motivation and the importance of self-efficacy. Apart from the many things I learned, two very specific factors stuck with me, which further helped me prioritize many things pertaining to school and organize myself in order to achieve my goals: the importance of self-efficacy and the influence of our interests! Self-efficacy is so important along the process of understanding the concept of motivation, ultimately because it depends on the beliefs we possess about ourselves and our capabilities, whilst also keeping in mind that both our beliefs and capabilities will help us become better and potentially achieve our goals. Motivation is also incredibly influenced by our interests; Not only is it important to do what like, but also, like what you do! For example, I always find myself gravitating back towards art, and in many instances, apart from being a great passion of mine, it had become a hobby where I find freedom of speech, freedom of choice and plethora of satisfaction. Ultimately, once I start a drawing, a painting, or an artistic idea, it becomes so motivating to me to complete it, in order to potentially enjoy the end result. I describe motivation in this context, not necessarily because it only applies to art or hobbies we acquire over time, but because motivation can positively influence us when we have tasks to finish at work, assessments to finish at school and/or responsibilities to take care of from our day to day lives. In the end, our growth mindset will set the pace for when we encounter an issue, situation, or task at hand. We should view new situations/tasks we encounter with an open mind, open heart, and whilst utilizing our already acquired abilities, we should also be happy that we are absorbing new information/skills along the way. Finally, it is important to remember our own self-efficacy, and why it is necessary to believe in ourselves and in our ability to accomplish established goals. We should always remember the importance of our interests and how we should always tackle a new situation with an open mind, to potentially acquire new knowledge, influence our already acquired knowledge and become better individuals overall. Best of luck this semester, I know you guys will do great, and always remember: Do what you like, and like what you do!
A Friend of IFCE Observation

Have Your Cake and Eat It Too in 2022

By Jonathan Lucero, Nutrition and Dietetics Senior

Now's the time where we find ourselves coming across articles in magazines titled “Biggest New Hairstyles for 2022” or “New diet will help you lose 22 pounds in 22 days in 2022!” in grocery store cashier lines. We can't help but scroll across the next best exercise machine, fat burner or supplement on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Tiktok. We are engulfed in so many options that will “help us be better.”

Most Americans spend December thinking about others; giving gifts, eating our favorite foods and spending quality time with family and friends. In my own experience, December 29th comes around the corner and I can't help but find myself thinking “what can I do to be better at creating habits, or what do I need to change in order to grow this coming year?” I know I can’t be alone. It’s natural to think about ourselves and our self-growth. But there is a stress and pressure that can come with the want to grow, doubt always finds a way to creep in when we are planning our goals to change. I am happy to say that according to a recent poll, 45% of participants overcame that doubt and made the first step to change their diet in the new year.

Every year thousands of people in America will decide that this is the year they will get the six-pack abs they had in college or lose (insert number here) pounds for their beach vacation in July. January is such an exciting and empowering time to initiate change and make it happen! In the eyes of a Dietitian-Nutritionist, this type of change starts with our diet. The word diet can be a little scary to some, but it can mean quite a few different things! It can refer to short term changes that are usually dedicated to weight loss or another purpose, like a vegan or vegetarian eating style. Diet can also simply be a person’s or community’s typical way of eating. When most hear the word diet, it’s swallowed with a thought of bad tasting food plus none of the foods they enjoy. What if I told you this year’s diet change does not need to be that way AND you will be able to follow this diet for the rest of your life. Would you believe me?

Small changes make lasting impact. In this diet YOU get to choose! It is important that you know sticking to a healthy diet means finding a way of eating that is not only nutritious but also that you find enjoyable; you should never have to cancel your favorite foods. Think of this as a lifestyle change, not another “diet.” This way we get to change one thing at a time! We have a lifetime of time after all. How about starting with easy substitutions? Try replacing any processed snacks with whole foods like yogurt, fruit, nuts or popcorn. Just by doing this you are dramatically reducing your added sugar intake! If you were to pair that with trying a new recipe ONE time a week instead of opting for a fast food dinner.. BOOM...you are set up for a successful week of dieting.
Eating healthy or changing your diet this year does not mean deprive yourself of the foods and drinks you love. There is room for all foods in a healthy diet, just less room for the not so nutritious ones.

Jonathan's Recommendations for Further Information

**Allrecipes** - This is a great resource for recipes in general! You can also look for a specific type of recipe, like vegetarian, or search for recipes that add a specific food. This would be helpful if you want to add more beans to your diet, for example.

**EatingWell** - This is a great site for healthy recipes.

The Bookshelf - References and Other Resources

**Things the WASH NM Team has read or seen that you might want to examine more closely**


Neff, Kristin (2021). *Fierce Self-Compassion: How women can harness kindness to speak up, claim their power and thrive*.

For Those in the Helping Professions


The faculty and students of the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of New Mexico would like to offer to all New Mexicans thoughts, ideas, and resources from ourselves and our areas of study and work -- counseling, educational psychology, family & child studies, and nutrition -- to enlighten, soften, and aid the COVID-19-related transitions. We intend to make this offering monthly, each with a theme relevant to our times. With informed reflection and action throughout this time, we can all improve our Wellbeing at School and at Home in New Mexico.

The WASH NM Editorial Team:

Ashley Martin-Cuellar, Visiting Lecturer of Family & Child Studies
Deborah Luffey, Lecturer of Nutrition and Dietetics
Heather Sands, Visiting Lecturer of Counselor Education
Jan Armstrong, Professor of Educational Psychology
Jay Parkes, Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Education and Professor of Educational Psychology, WASH NM
Kris Goodrich, Associate Dean for Research and Professor of Counselor Education
Maria-Elena Salazar, Lecturer of Family & Child Studies in Early Childhood Education
Ziggy Embick, Student Designer, College of Education & Human Sciences

Additional Contributors to this issue:

Janelle Cole, Family Development Program
Johnathan Lucero, Nutrition and Dietetics Senior, UNM
Gabriella B. Gonzalez Rivera, Graduate Student Educational Psychology
How to Pick up WASH NM

All issues of WASH NM are available in pdf format at: https://coehs.unm.edu/departments-programs/ifce/wash-nm.html

How to Sign up for WASH NM

An e-mail distribution list (WASH_NM-L) will announce each new issue. You can subscribe to the list by sending a message to listserv@list.unm.edu:

Leave the Subject field blank.

In the body of message type (with no other text): subscribe WASH_NM-L Firstname Lastname

About the Department of Individual, Family and Community Education

The department houses four diverse, but interconnected, programs that prepare students to address the myriad issues faced by the State of New Mexico. Our faculty members are leaders in their disciplines of Counselor Education, Educational Psychology, Family and Child Studies, and Nutrition; although each of these programs reflect different professional fields and identities, we all have shared values of human development, diversity, and excellence in scholarship and teaching. We offer various Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral Degrees and a number of programs have achieved national accreditations in their fields, a true marker of success and innovation.

ifce@unm.edu

https://coehs.unm.edu/departments-programs/ifce/index.html