Standing Tall in the Face of Adversity: The Power of Wellness-Enhancing Practices

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Nice to Meet You!

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- Psychotherapist, Private Practice, 1991
- Published Researcher: Wellness, Resilience, Psychedelics and Well-Being
- Co-author: *WILD 5 Wellness Workbook & The Science Behind Wellness*
- Co-author: The HERO Wellness Scale
- Psych Congress Steering Committee member
- Wife, Mom, Grandmother, Type I Diabetic, Meditator, Lover of Nature and Music
Adversity: A state or instance of serious or continued difficulty or misfortune

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly revealed the limits of our resilience and wellness
Resilience in the face of adversity is an urgent human need!
Post-Traumatic Growth

Wellness: A Possible Antidote to Adversity

But First, We Must Define Wellness
WHO Definition of Health (1948)

“...a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

Why **Wellness** as an **Antidote** Makes Sense
Wellness-Enhancing Practices: Powerful Evidence for Their Utility

A Mind-Body Connection
Is Wellness Good for the Brain?

Exercise
RCT enrolled 120 community-dwelling older adults (ages 55-80) without dementia were randomly assigned to an aerobic exercise group ($n = 60$) or to a stretching control group ($n = 60$). MRI collected before, at 6 mos, and at the end of the study.

**Aerobic exercise group:** 2% increase in volume over the 1-year period

**Stretching control group:** 1.4% decline in volume over the 1-year period

Effectively reversed age-related loss in hippocampal volume by 1 to 2 years

Are Positive Emotions Anti-Inflammatory?

Joy – Awe - Love
High Positive Affect = Lower Inflammation

119 freshman undergraduates (36 males, 83 females) from large West Coast university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Emotions Predicting IL-6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DPES Subscale</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amusement</td>
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<td>Compassion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contentment</td>
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<td>Joy</td>
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<td>Love</td>
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<td>Pride</td>
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WILD 5 Wellness - KickStart30
A Novel Wellness Program
How Do We **Cultivate** Resilience & Wellness in Pursuit of **Post-Traumatic Growth**?
WILD 5 Wellness

Wellness Interventions for Life’s Demands

Exercise
Nutrition
Social Connectedness
Mindfulness
Sleep

Tried & True Practices
All are equally important
Perfection is Not the Goal

Positive Psychology Building Exercises

Positive Psychology Building Exercises
KickStart30 Wellness-Enhancing Practices

Exercise
- Exercise 30 minutes each day for 30 days; aim for at least moderate intensity

Mindfulness
- Practice mindfulness for at least 10 minutes each day for 30 days (www.WILD5Meditations.com)

Sleep
- Implement 4 or more of the 6 sleep hygiene practices each day for 30 days

Social Connectedness
- Meet or call a minimum of 2 friends or family members each day for 30 days

Nutrition
- Log your meals/snacks/beverages/alcohol each day for 30 days
  [Follow the MIND diet principles as closely as you can]
MENTAL HEALTH
(N=82)
Disease Markers
30-Day Intervention

Depression (PHQ-9)
- N=82
- Mean: 11.4 (PRE, P<.0001) vs. Mean: 6.4 (POST)
- % Improvement = 43%

Anxiety (GAD-7)
- N=82
- Mean: 9.9 (PRE, P<.0001) vs. Mean: 5.9 (POST)
- % Improvement = 40%

Sleep Quality (PSQI)
- N=82
- Mean: 10.3 (PRE, P<.0001) vs. Mean: 7.3 (POST)
- % Improvement = 29%

**HERO Wellness Scale Scores**

**30-Day Intervention**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>PRE</th>
<th>POST</th>
<th>% Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Happiness</strong></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enthusiasm</strong></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience</strong></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Optimism</strong></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>45%</td>
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Measurement Matters
Scores range from 0–50. Higher scores indicate higher levels of wellness.
Tracking Matters
Resources Matter
Resources Building Wellness and Resilience

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Cultivating Wellness & Resilience

1. Take Baby Steps

2. Modify:
   - Actions
   - Attitudes
   - Expectations

3. Practice Self-Compassion
Wellness is a scientifically supported antidote to life’s slings and arrows.