



Newton South Wellness Newsletter



The Global Wellness Institute defines wellness as **the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.**

Welcome to Volume 7, Issue #1 of the Newton South Wellness Newsletter! The goal of this periodic publication is to educate, motivate and communicate the values of living a wellness lifestyle. Our department is dedicated to helping students, faculty/staff, and community members understand the effects of daily decisions and their impact on overall health and well-being. The newsletter is divided into five sections: Wellness Dimension Focus, Message from the Editor, What's New(it's new!!), Wellness in the News, and Tips for Living. Let's get started!

***Wellness Dimension Focus – Intellectual Wellness** – A state in which your mind is engaged in lively interaction with the world around you. Intellectual wellness involves unbridled curiosity and ongoing learning. This dimension of wellness implies that you can apply the things you have learned and create opportunities to learn more. You engage your mind in lively interaction with the world around you.*
(https://www.ndsu.edu/wellness/about_us/seven_dimensions_of_wellness/)

Message from the Editor (Mr. Rotatori, Wellness Department Head) - I have been in education for 34 years with this being my last. I can't help but wonder about the potential influence I have had on adolescent teenagers and if I have made a difference in their lives. I know one thing for certain, I do not get enough time with my students to teach the content that I would love to cover. So, I always reach for a different goal as a wellness educator at Newton South. One of my top priorities is to spark a curiosity and self awareness in my students. If I can do this, then I have created the opportunity for my students to continue growing and seeking out a holistic integration of physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, fueling the body, engaging the mind, and nurturing the spirit. After all, wellness is a lifelong process. At age 57, I continue to evaluate my current state of wellness and apply the latest information and research. This also helps keep my curriculum up to date as I express this through my teaching. Well, I have one more year and four quarters of teaching to make a final impression on the 360 students that will be sitting in front of me, I hope it lasts a lifetime!

What's New! - We continue our efforts to provide the highest quality wellness education for our students at Newton South. Here are a few more **NEW** things happening this year!

- **Welcome Dave Rota!** - Dave is joining our staff after spending the past 19 years teaching elementary PE. He brings an extensive background in fitness (CSCS, USA Weightlifting Level 1 Coach, and various Personal Trainer Certifications) and Yoga and will be teaching four different curriculums. On Saturdays, Dave works at the Cambridge Program for Individuals with Special Needs, an exemplary program recognized across the country. In June, he was on the Bronze medal team for Unified Doubles in Tennis at the Special Olympics of MA. Dave is also a Brain Gym and Rhythmic Movement Training consultant and instructor. Fun fact, he did his student teaching here at Newton South 20 years ago!
- **Healthy Heart Course** - there were many hours of work this summer developing our new curriculum for the Healthy Heart elective. This fitness course is designed to educate students about the benefits of cardiovascular exercise. This course includes CPR/AED certification as well!

- **Mental Health Bulletin Board** - Depression, self-harm and suicide are rising among American adolescents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention there has been a 60% increase in depressive episodes and suicides since 2007 (see full article [here](#)). Our new Mental Health bulletin board is located in the field house lobby. It is an important resource for our students and faculty and staff. Come down and check it out.
- **Adaptive Wellness Equipment** - Mr. Quern has been researching and purchasing equipment that are designed to help students with mental or physical challenges. Our goal is to make our class environments inclusive and accessible for every student. The interest in Spikeball and Bocce has been on the rise and we were able to access more inclusive equipment for each of the activities.
- **SHRC, Athletes and Wellness** - The SHRC invited us to collaborate our efforts to promote monthly celebrations of diversity and visibility in various fields over the course of the year. The month of September was dedicated to Health, Wellness and Athletics. Our community members were able to view running slide shows this month on all of our display monitors throughout the building. This is a collaboration that we are excited to continue next September!
- **MA Comprehensive Health and PE Framework, June 2023** - The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education has approved, for the first time since 1999 an updated comprehensive health and physical education framework. Here is the [updated framework](#). Newton South wellness department plans on aligning our curriculum and grading structure with this framework. This is very exciting!!
- **Water Refill Stations** - Thanks to the Class of 2022 who donated 4 new water refill stations in our facility. Three of them can be found directly in our area of the building (the field house, breezeway lobby near gym B, and fitness center).

Wellness in the News – Exercising your brain: 6 ways to build mental fitness

Posted January 24, 2022 by Dr. James R Bavis

Just as our bodies require care and exercise over the course of our life, so do our brains — especially as we age. Lifting weights strengthens our muscles, while strengthening our mental “muscles” improves our memory, attention, brain speed, people skills, intelligence and navigation.

The key is variety. Similarly when we exercise our body, if doing something becomes too easy, it’s time to make a change to build brain power. The more something is second nature, the less our brain has to work to do it.

For example, if you can do a crossword puzzle in record time, it’s time to increase the difficulty level to challenge yourself and get the best workout for your brain.

People of all ages can benefit from incorporating a few brain exercises into their lives to stay mentally sharp for the long haul. All it takes is a few minutes each day. Studies have found it’s most beneficial to work on these exercises a little bit each day, instead of spending a few hours each week.

Summa Health offers 6 ways to reach your desired mental fitness level, in addition to a balanced diet and regular physical activity. These exercises can improve just about everything in your life because, if you think about it, your brain is at the core of everything you do.

Play games

Doing crossword puzzles, Sudoku games, jigsaw puzzles and other games that rely on logic, math, word and visuospatial skills are great ways to increase brainpower. These types of games require multiple cognitive

abilities, which challenges your brain and improves processing speed and memory. Now you know it's OK, even healthy, for adults to carve out a few minutes each day to play games.

Read a variety of books

Books are filled with interesting characters, infinite information and facts. Challenge your brain by reading a variety of topics, from historical fiction to contemporary classics to romance. Your brain will get a workout imagining different time periods, cultures and people, while learning new things and building vocabulary. Plus, you'll be developing interesting stories to share with others.

Use all your senses

Try incorporating activities that simultaneously engage all five of your senses, from taking a cooking class to visiting a farmer's market or food festival to trying a new restaurant. Using all your senses helps to strengthen your brain by focusing on smelling, touching, tasting, seeing and hearing all at the same time.

Daily meditation

Meditation is known to calm your body, slow your breathing and reduce stress and anxiety. But, what you may not know is daily meditation also can improve your memory and processing power. By creating a calm mental state, you engage your brain in new and interesting ways. All it takes is stealing five minutes each day to meditate in a quiet spot.

Learn a new skill

No matter your age, your brain is capable of learning new skills at any point in your life. It's a great way to strengthen brain connections because when you learn a new skill, you work multiple areas of your brain. For example, your memory comes into play, your brain learns new movements and you associate things differently.

Learning to play an instrument, building a ship in a bottle, learning new dance moves or a new language all challenge your brain in new ways and can add something fun and interesting to your life, to boot.

Then, once you've learned the new skill, teach it to someone else. It's one of the best ways to expand your learning — and brainpower.

Train your brain

Brain training has become a popular exercise in recent years. From formal courses, online programs and books, people are realizing the benefits of training their brains to sharpen response times and attention.

One example program is called BrainHQ. It's a brain-training program that offers dozens of brain exercises designed to improve memory, attention, brain speed, intelligence, navigation and communication. BrainHQ works by continually measuring your performance to serve up exercises that are tailored for you. The exercises take less than 5 minutes and can be done at home using your computer or phone.

The old adage rings true: "You don't use it, you lose it." Whichever exercises you choose, focusing on your brain health has been proven to improve your concentration, focus, memory and mental agility, no matter your age. Hey, you may even learn something new and enriching along the way.

Tips for Living – "It is better to have a fair intellect that is well used than a powerful one that is idle."
— Bryant H. McGill

Choose  *Kindness!*