



Spring 2021
Employee Wellness Initiative



As we celebrate Wellness Week on campus, we invite you to experiment with small changes that can create a large and lasting impact in this six-week challenge (March 29-May 7). This program allows you to explore simple adjustments in your behavior to build habits supportive of overall well-being.

We are offering 12 activities, divided into three categories:

- **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
 - [CHALLENGE #1 - ACTIVITY ADJUSTMENT](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #2 - ONE STEP AT A TIME](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #3 - STRETCH YOURSELF](#)
 - [CHALLENGE # 4 - UNDERCOVER ACTIVITY](#)

- **NUTRITION**
 - [CHALLENGE #5 - H2GO](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #6 - KITCHEN EDITION](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #7 - MORNING MORSELS](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #8 - SUGAR SHOCKER](#)

- **EMOTIONAL WELLNESS**
 - [CHALLENGE #9 - IGNITE KINDNESS](#)
 - [CHALLENGE #10 - MINDFUL MOMENTS](#)
 - [CHALLENGE # 11 - POWER OF PERSPECTIVE](#)
 - [CHALLENGE # 12 - SWEET SLUMBER](#)

For the next six weeks (through Friday, May 7), you are encouraged to choose one topic per week from the 12 options provided. Try to do an activity each day and at the end of the week reflect on what you did, what you learned and the outcome.

At the end of the six weeks (no later than Sunday, May 9) please complete [this brief survey](#) for a chance to win one of our great wellness prizes! You must be an FTE staff or faculty member to be eligible for a prize.

Most of the content for this program brochure was provided to us by CBIZ, our benefits consulting partner, as part of their “Ventures In Vitality” program. Their content has been reformatted for this publication.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



CHALLENGE 1 – ACTIVITY ADJUSTMENT

While some folks enjoy hitting the gym or taking a run, many find it nearly impossible to stick to an “exercise” routine.

Why? They do it because they *need* to instead of because they *want* to; working out is a chore (in fact the word “working” is right in the label). For many, fitting in activity is a *should do* on our daily list instead of a *want to do*. This week is all about an attitude adjustment toward activity!

In order to prioritize physical activity, we need to look forward to it. Try to focus on the immediate rewards, which will keep you motivated, such as enjoyment, improved mood and increased focus. Being physically active should be a celebration of what our bodies are capable of instead of a punishment or a means to lose weight or lower blood pressure – those things are just the cherry on top, they don’t get you excited to get off the couch every day.

This week let’s rediscover the right reasons to get active and have some fun!

Your mission this week is to increase your physical activity by participating in activities you find fun and enjoyable!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Buddy up. Fitness is more fun with a friend! You can take a walk or a class together and as an added bonus – you can split the willpower. Only one of you has to be motivated on any given day for you both to get moving.

Try a new class or activity you have always been interested in. Pick something that looks like fun and go for it! Let go of the fear of embarrassment over how you look doing it and just have some fun!

Dance it out. Dance fitness is an excellent way to be active and relieve stress.

Try a Virtual Exercise Program. Do a search to find something you enjoy and give it a shot in the comfort of your own home.

Take it outside. One of the best ways to be active is getting outdoors; enjoy a hike, a walk, roller skating or bike ride. Bringing nature into your exercise is added fuel for the mental benefits.

Include the family. Introduce a new activity to the youngsters in your life and then try to keep up! You could try a nature walk, bike ride, backyard Olympics or neighborhood ballgame. And don’t forget the dog! Your furry friend will love taking a walk with you.

Spice up your normal routine by creating a new playlist, developing fun rewards for yourself, changing up your location, etc.

Walk around campus using these [pre-mapped routes](#) – three times around the academic quad walkways will equal a mile!

Check out a bike from the Information Desk in Whitaker to ride around campus at lunchtime (you must provide your own helmet)

USE THE SPACE BELOW TO REFLECT ON YOUR SUCCESSES THIS WEEK

What did you try? What worked? What was the outcome?

CHALLENGE 2 - ONE STEP AT A TIME

Walking is the single most universally useful way to increase physical activity. Its benefits have been very widely researched and well-documented. Increasing your daily steps is linked to lowering risk of disease (particularly heart disease and type-2 diabetes) and death. You will also notice the more immediate rewards of improved mood, less stress and better sleep as you ramp up your walking breaks.

Recent technologies have made it a breeze to track our activity, and we encourage you to use a fitness device such as a FitBit or a fitness tracking app this week to help you get a clear picture of your paces. Most smartphones have a built-in pedometer; a free solution if you always have your phone with you.

Your mission this week is to increase your activity with the most tried and true method: Walking! Increase your steps this week to meet your mission.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Every minute of walking takes approximately 100 steps (2,500 steps is approximately one mile), which adds up quickly when you look for ways to fit extra steps into your day:

Make a walking date with a friend or set up a friendly challenge via an app such as My Fitness Pal.

If you use an activity device, you can track your steps and make it a goal to increase each day.

Make it a goal this week to create at least two new opportunities to walk each day.

- Park a little farther from the office or store.
- Take the stairs.
- Talk to co-workers in person instead of through email or phone.
- Skip the conference room - arrange for walking meetings.
- Forget about un-packing the groceries in one trip, extra trips mean extra steps.
- Pace during daily activities such as talking on the phone, brushing your teeth or waiting on the microwave.
- Circle around your house or even around the block before picking up your mail each day.
- Walk the perimeter of the store before you begin shopping.
- Pass by the drive-thru and walk into the restaurant or bank instead.
- Early for your appointment? Good for you! Don't sit and wait, go for a quick stroll after you check in.

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CHALLENGE 3 - STRETCH YOURSELF

It's hard to beat the feeling of a really good stretch – that slight challenge to your muscles as you allow your body to expand and breathe a sigh of relief. Not only does stretching feel amazing, but it is also an essential part of flexibility and overall fitness. It helps prevent injury, maintain agility, posture and balance, and makes you more efficient at other exercise movements.

Sitting most of the day is common for many of us. This keeps our muscle groups relaxed, slowing down brain function and metabolism and escalating back pain. Even for those of us who do stand during the day, it's often repetitive or demanding work, and stretching can again save the day by offering our body some variety and protecting from injury.

Your mission this week is to build your fitness and physical function by adding more stretching to your daily routine.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Make it a policy to stretch for at least 10 minutes twice a day, or at least five minutes before and after every workout.
- Start in the morning and stick to light dynamic stretches to get you started (arm and body swings, high steps, etc.)
- Use a foam roll to help loosen up connective tissue and flush out waste. They are inexpensive and easy to use; an investment that is well worth it!
- Repetition is key. Hold stretches for 20 to 30 seconds, ease out of it partially for three seconds, and then get right back into it for another 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat two to three times per stretch.
- Avoid strenuous pulsing and listen to your body; if it's too painful, don't force it.
- Breathe deeply. When you breathe shallow and rapidly, your body remains tense. Deep breathing helps your body relax and oxygenates your muscles, actually making them capable of stretching further.
- Try a yoga, Pilates or tai chi class; all of which incorporate breathing, muscle building and stretching right into the workout.
- Log in to [BHS](#) (username Hood) and read this article on [exercises you can do at your desk](#) or watch this [Deskercise! webinar](#) (just click OK if prompted for Adobe Connect login credentials).

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CHALLENGE 4 - UNDERCOVER ACTIVITY

Physical activity has been engineered out of most of our daily activities that used to require it. These innovations that have made life easier are now increasing our risk of death: humans are designed to move!

In order to off-set the negative consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, we must consciously add physical movement back into our daily lives. This doesn't mean you have to commit to an intense daily exercise routine, but rather, look for "excuses to move" and add short bouts of activity to your daily routine. It's actually pretty simple, but it all starts with bringing awareness and creating a plan: that's what this week is all about!

Your mission this week is to increase your physical activity by sneaking short bouts of exercise into your existing daily routine.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Create a custom routine. Identify two or three movements that you don't hate. For example, maybe you despise squats and push-ups but don't mind lunges and crunches. Think of these moves as your allies and create a short go-to routine. (Ex: 10 lunges and 25 crunches). Create prompts to perform your routine throughout the day.

Place colorful dot stickers around your house (on the bathroom mirror, kitchen cabinet, etc.) When you notice them, do your routine.

Pair your routine with activities you do every day such as showering and do your routine before or after it.

Use your TV time. Stretch during commercials or create triggers for moving during your TV show. For example, every time the main character makes a joke you do 10 jumping jacks.

Get clean. More housework = more movement. It's a win-win!

Look for excuses to move. Use the intercom, telephone and email less and walk to your coworkers instead.

Move for at least one minute for every 30 minutes of sitting – you can even set an alarm to remind yourself.

Don't wait: move! Waiting on the microwave, placed on hold for a call, or waiting in an exam room for the doctor – these are great moments to add some movement

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NUTRITION



CHALLENGE 5 - H2GO

Water is your body's beverage of choice! It hydrates without any detrimental caffeine, sugar or additives. Adequate hydration is essential to every system in your body. It helps:

- Regulate your body temperature
- Lubricate and cushion your joints
- Protect your spinal cord and other sensitive tissue
- Fight disease
- Improve energy level
- Aids waste elimination

Added bonus: replacing one 12-ounce soda with water per day can help you lose up to 15 pounds per year and save you up to \$100 per month!

We've all been taught to drink 8 glasses of water a day, but the glass counting is not the point. Simply put, water needs vary for each person, but very few of us are getting enough, even if we don't realize it. Don't rely on thirst to decide when to drink water. If you feel thirsty, you are already mildly dehydrated. Aim to drink water throughout the day, starting with a large glass first thing in the morning to offset a night without fluid. Pale yellow or clear urine with little to no odor is a good indicator that you are adequately hydrated.

Your mission this week is to increase your water intake to stay healthy and hydrated!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Set some rules for yourself. Here are three great policies to adopt:

- Have a glass of water first thing in the morning
- Have a glass of water before or after every meal
- Replace one soda or other sugary drink with water

Infuse water to give it some flavor. Try one or a combination of the following: mint, ginger, lemon, lime, oranges, strawberries, cucumber.

Invest in a nice large water bottle and take it with you everywhere you go. Oftentimes we don't drink enough water simply because we don't think about it until we are thirsty. If you keep water in your line of sight you can drastically increase how much you drink.

Try it carbonated. Many people prefer sparkling water or club soda; just make sure you get one with no artificial flavoring or sweeteners (La Croix and Perrier are both good options). Or, you may want to buy plain sparkling water and add your own flavors with fresh fruit, veggies and herbs.

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CHALLENGE 6 - KITCHEN EDITION

In the quest for a sustainable, nutritious diet, the food we buy and eat is just the tip of the iceberg. The way that we store, prepare and serve our food has a huge impact. Portioning snacks in advance, planning meals each week, hiding unhealthy foods out of site and even serving our food away from the table and on smaller plates can add up to hundreds of calories a week!

Let's take a closer look at our kitchens and how they may be working against our waistlines. Explore how to alter your food environment at home to help you eat less and more healthily with little to no effort using our tips for success.

Our partners at Giant Food offer a number of [free resources for helping you make good food choices](#). You can also visit [MyPlate.gov](#) for tips and tools.

Your mission this week is to analyze and adjust your home eating environment to help you effortlessly avoid overeating.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Create a weekly meal plan. If you need some help, try using a [meal planner template](#)

Rethink food storage. Proximity and visibility of food matters. You are 30 percent more likely to eat the first thing you see in the cabinets or fridge; foods left on the counter are eaten twice as fast!

- **Make tempting foods invisible or inconvenient.** Store unhealthy foods on the bottom shelf of the fridge or in the back of the cabinets.
- **Give produce center stage.** Pre-wash and cut fresh veggies and get them out of the crisper drawer and onto the center shelf. Try leaving a fruit bowl on your counter.

Portion snacks in advance. You eat 50 percent more when snacking directly from the bag/box/carton. Portion out your snacks in advance and make it a rule not to take the whole container to the couch.

Rethink your serving wear. Studies have shown that people eat more when they're served food in or on larger dishes – up to 22 percent more! Use smaller plates, serving dishes and serving spoons.

Prepare your meals away from the table. Folks who do this eat 19 percent less than those who serve food directly on the dinner table.

Ditch the candy dish. Again, you eat what you see. If you can't get rid of it altogether, get it at least six feet away from where you sit – you will eat half as much.

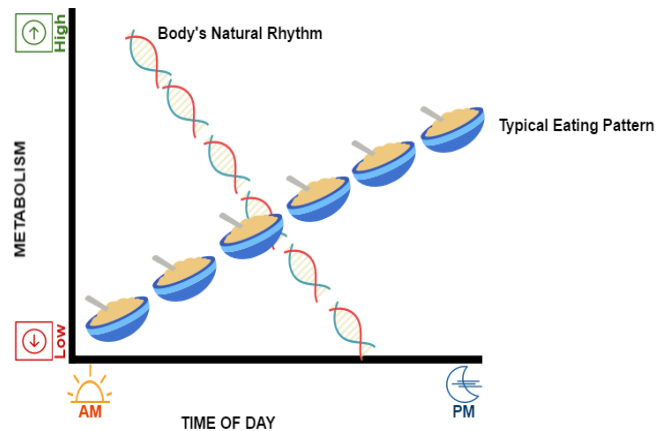
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CHALLENGE 7 - MORNING MORSELS

When you do not eat within the first few hours of waking, your body begins conserving calories and slowing down brain function. Not exactly what we want for a productive day and efficient metabolism, yet 31 million Americans skip breakfast, which truly is “the most important meal of the day.”

Our body’s natural rhythm is to have the highest levels of metabolism in the morning that slowly decrease throughout the day. If we eat with our body’s natural metabolism, we can expect more energy and fewer issues with weight management.



Even if you consider yourself a content “non-breakfast eater,” you might be surprised at the effect it can have – so this week, give it a try! The best breakfast has protein as a foundation and also includes a small amount of carbohydrate (fruit, vegetable or whole grain) and healthy fat. Enjoying a protein-packed breakfast will:

- Jump-start your metabolism
- Keep you full
- Regulate your blood sugar
- Wake up your brain to improve memory and concentration
- Help manage weight

Your mission this week is to eat a meal which includes protein within 2 hours of waking.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Keep the staples of a healthy breakfast convenient: Hard boil and peel eggs for the whole week, pre-make smoothie packets to toss in the blender, portion out nuts and other grab-and-go options.

Easy breakfast options:

- Oatmeal with a spoonful of peanut butter and diced apple
- A hard-boiled egg, handful of nuts, and an apple or banana
- Quinoa with berries and nuts
- Scrambled eggs and a small glass of 100% fruit juice or green juice
- Smoothie made with Greek yogurt, almond milk, frozen unsweetened fruit and spinach or ground flaxseed

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CHALLENGE 8 - SUGAR SHOCKER

Cutting back on sugar is perhaps the single best nutritional change you can make for yourself. Reducing your sugar intake will lower your risk of heart disease, diabetes and dementia and also help you lose weight, prevent headaches, keep your teeth healthy and stabilize hormones along with countless other symptoms that have been reported to disappear with the reduction of sugar. Once considered a rare or special treat, sugary foods have become a staple of many modern diets, and we are paying the price with our health.

It is recommended that we keep added sugars to **six teaspoons per day (about 25 grams)**, but the average American consumes about 22 teaspoons per day. The biggest culprit is in your cup. Just one 20-ounce soda, juice or coffee drink can have up to 20 teaspoons of sugar; that's three days' worth in just one drink!

Sugar is addictive: the more you have it the more you will crave it and the more it takes to feel satisfied. It activates the reward center in your brain the same way that drugs such as nicotine and heroine do. So, if you believe you have a hopeless "sweet tooth," don't be discouraged; as you take small steps toward reducing your intake, it will become easier and easier over time.

Your mission this week is to decrease your consumption of sugary snacks and beverages.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Allow yourself to have a sugary treat but cut your normal portion in half.

Replace one sugary beverage or snack with a glass of water and low-sugar snack each day this week.

Keep sugary foods out of sight – you are much less likely to eat what you can't see.

Don't turn to artificial sweeteners; their effects are just as harmful as or even worse than real sugar.

Opt for unsweetened fruit products (applesauce, canned fruit and juices) and add a drizzle of honey for a touch of sweetness. Fruit products are often packed with sugar even though they are branded as "healthy."

Beware these top sources of hidden sugar: yogurt, dried fruit and other fruit products, ketchup, salad dressing, soup, crackers, spaghetti sauce, granola bars, cereals, bread and frozen dinners.

To side-step cravings, plan out your meals and drink plenty of water.

Don't rely on willpower. Cut your candy bar (or other treat) in half in advance and store the portion you don't plan to eat out of site.

Pair sugary treats with a high-fiber food such as a handful of nuts to minimize harmful effects of sugar.

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EMOTIONAL WELLNESS



CHALLENGE 9 - IGNITE KINDNESS

Cultivating vitality isn't just about focusing on ourselves; making a conscious effort to contribute to the well-being of others is a critical piece of developing our sense of purpose and belonging. You have the potential to change the world, one random act of kindness at a time, and this week your challenge is to do just that!

If you have ever been the recipient of a small act of kindness, you know that something as simple as a warm smile can change your whole day. And being kind to others isn't just good for them; it's good for you, too. Being kind to others when we are experiencing stress or anxiety can actually help calm us down. Not to mention, kindness is contagious! One small act of kindness can create a ripple effect, impacting more people than you may ever know.

Your mission this week is to perform at least one random act of kindness each day to change the world for the better!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Be spontaneous: Heighten your awareness to the needs of those around you when you are out and about. Avoid the tendency to dismiss simple things such as picking up a quarter that was dropped or letting someone merge on the highway as unappreciated. Instead, take advantage of these moments and do the kind thing.

Plan to be kind: Think about someone in need and make an effort to brighten their day.

Get Social: Spread kindness on social media by sharing a positive post or offering an uplifting comment on someone else's post. You could offer a positive review of a product or service you've used.

Try these acts of kindness:

- Hold the door, help carry a bag/package or pick up something that someone dropped.
- Pay for the person next to you in line whether it's a fast-food restaurant, grocery store, parking garage, etc.
- Smile and compliment others you encounter.
- Give someone a flower or other small gift "just because."
- Write a thank you note or email for someone who may not know your appreciation.
- Donate clothes, food or blood.

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CHALLENGE 10 - MINDFUL MOMENTS

Mindfulness is intentional awareness of the present moment, where we observe our thoughts, emotions and experiences without judgment. Mindfulness is described as paying attention, on purpose from moment to moment. Practicing mindfulness can help us cope with daily stressors by directing our attention into what's right in front of us – the here and now.

When you are feeling overwhelmed or in a rush to get from point A to point B, being mindful may seem very difficult. However, these are the moments we can often benefit the most from mindfulness. Remind yourself that this is your time and you only have it once. A regular mindfulness practice can even change how the brain functions and create new neural pathways. Research suggests people who practice mindfulness live longer as a result of this improved brain functioning. Mindfulness expert Ellen Langer has said “wherever you put the mind, the body will follow.”

Your mission this week is to set an intention to practice coming into the direct experience of the present moment several times throughout the day.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Bring awareness to your thoughts. Allow them to enter without passing judgment. i.e., feeling guilty or angry at your thoughts.

Focus on one thing at a time, be okay and present with what you are doing, versus what you could be doing.

Use your five senses while doing an activity: what do you see, hear, taste, smell and feel?

Start to identify which activities you mindlessly participate in and bring a sense of awareness.

Select at least one mindfulness exercise from the provided list to help you accomplish this mission. We have provided several different [mindfulness exercises](#) to help you accomplish this. Try at least one of these exercises each day.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION AVAILABLE ON CAMPUS

- Mindful Mondays for Faculty and Staff, 12:15 -12:45 p.m.
- Mindful Meditation group for all on Thursdays 12:30-1 p.m.

Please email omalley@hood.edu to register and to get a zoom link

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CHALLENGE 11 - POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

The power of positive thinking is profound! Regularly experiencing positive emotions such as joy, pride, gratitude and inspiration are predictive of overall human flourishing including longer life span, less stress, and better psychological and physical health. Recent research has shown that we all operate around a happiness “set point.” Surprisingly, only 50 percent of this set point is genetic; 10 percent is related to life circumstances, and the other **40 percent is purely under our control.**

This week, your challenge is to capitalize on the power of this 40 percent and ramp up your optimism to reap the benefits.

Your mission this week is to make a daily effort to tap into the power of positive thinking in order to cultivate optimism.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Optimism is an emotional skill that takes consistent practice to create a lasting habit. Here are some tips to start transforming yourself into a more positive thinker:

- Think about, reflect on and emphasize the good things in your life and watch carefully for negative self-talk.
- Commit to doing one specific positive thing for your health each day.
- Look for reasons to be grateful in the mundane. Stay accountable by keeping a [gratitude journal](#).
- Smile – the physical act of smiling, even if we aren’t happy, can greatly impact our mood and outlook.
- Look for the learning opportunity in every failure and bad experience- if it helps to talk things out with a friend, do it!
- Start small by identifying a specific area of your life you tend to have negative thoughts about. The key is to recognize and replace the negative with a positive thought.
- Remember: It’s not about ignoring reality; it’s about taking a proactive approach to life.
- Repeat affirmations that inspire and motivate you. Post sticky notes or reminders that keep this on the forefront of your mind.
- Don’t ruminate on negative things that are out of your control. Practice the art of letting go.

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CHALLENGE 12 - SWEET SLUMBER

Once respected as an important part functioning and health, sleep has gained a new reputation as an inconvenience, a luxury or even a sign of weakness. However, an activity that will claim one-third of our life is not to be taken lightly; **it is the single most important behavioral experience we have.**

On average, adults need eight hours of sleep. Yet, the average American adult only gets about six-and-a-half hours per night. While some of us can still function on less than eight hours, research suggests that no one is at full capacity on six-and-a-half hours of sleep.

While sleeping, your brain processes the endless stream of input it receives throughout the day to consolidate memories. Those who get enough sleep experience a threefold increase in creativity and problem solving. If you are sacrificing sleep for work, a good night's sleep is the best remedy for your productivity and quality of work.

Sleep is also your brain's only opportunity for "house cleaning." While your body rests, your brain stays hard at work, shifting into cleaning mode. When you don't sleep, your brain gets hypothetically "dirty," resulting in varied impairments. Recent studies have even shown that chronic sleep deprivation contributes to an increased risk for cognitive diseases.

This week, we challenge you to respect the need for sleep and get some quality shuteye. For sleep resources, please visit the [CDC website](#).

Your mission this week is to get a better night's sleep.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

DO	DON'T
Avoid stimulating activities before bed such as watching TV or paying bills	Drink alcohol before bed. It may make you drowsy, but it decreases your quality of sleep
Try decaffeinated hot tea or a warm bath before bed	Force yourself to stay up if you are tired.
Dim your lights before bed. Try putting a small lamp in your bathroom to use at night.	Keep your bedroom too warm. Around 70 degrees is best.
Keep it dark: Invest in blackout curtains, an eye mask, and/or an alarm clock without a bright face light.	Have caffeine late in the afternoon or evening
Use white noise such as a fan	Consume most of your liquids in the evening.
Devote one hour before bed to a relaxing routine and stick to a consistent bedtime.	Force yourself to try to sleep. If your mind is wandering, turn on a lamp and get your thoughts out on paper, then, try going back to bed.

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For Physical, Emotional, Social, Intellectual, Spiritual, Environmental, Financial, and Occupational Well-Being

Hood College's HealthyU wellness program helps to create and nurture a culture of organizational and personal health to demonstrate that employee well-being is a top priority for the College. The College encourages the well-being of its employees by providing a supportive work environment in which employees participate in HealthyU activities to promote their own personal well-being and productivity while also becoming active partners in managing health care utilization in the College's sponsored plans. The pursuit of organizational and personal health is an important way for Hood College to attract and retain the best global talent to serve the changing needs of our students.

Please visit the [HealthyU website](#) for more information.