

January 2021 Health Notes by Evelyn Ames *Look for the Silver Lining During Pandemic*

“When in Doubt, Have a Nice Cup of Tea” Julie Andrews

Finding the silver lining in what has been a stressful, exhaustive year is important to everyone’s overall health and well-being. Finding meaning and connection and reconnection with friends, relatives, and colleagues through virtual gatherings has helped maintain our overall wellness. This reconnection will more than likely outlast this pandemic. As predictions go, another pandemic may occur within in the next few years. Who knows? But recall a well-known song, “accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative”!

Halbert L. Dunn, in describing “High Level Wellness,” said a person finds ways to function at a high potential within an ever-changing environment. Acknowledging that physical deterioration does occur, Dunn focused attention on factors other than physical mobility and capacity in relation to older adults and their capacity to achieve or not achieve high level-wellness. He firmly believed that “the state of being dynamically well involves the exploration and participation by the individual in the fascinating and ever-changing panorama of life itself”. (Check November 2009 Health Notes for expanded explanation of *High Level Wellness*.)

The following list of personal activities and suggested activities is shared by our WWURA friends about their behaviors for enhancing their well-being during this period of isolation. Thanks to all who sent their thoughts.

- My New Year's resolution is to do more yoga and less TV watching. The Bellingham Senior Activity Center has an excellent class.
- There is one element that has been effective for me and that is keeping busy with projects, things to do, things that have deadlines, and those that are important to me. Knitting while watching TV keeps hands and mind busy!
- For physical health, two Nordic concepts, friluftsliv and hygge, are important. Lots has been written about their importance (including an article in the 12-27-20 NYTimes). Friluftsliv is the concept of spending time outdoors regardless of the weather. Hygge connotes warmth and coziness. An example would be enjoying a mug of glühwein/glögg/warm cider while enjoying a fire in the fireplace after coming in from a walk in the rain or snow. Hygge could be good for mental health, too.
- Multitasking in the evenings while watching/listening to whatever is on TV.
- Catching up on answering emails, browsing through magazines (they do pile up), and re-gluing photos into trip albums.
- It is a time of introspection, to think about life and all that I have to be grateful for. It is also a time for spiritual study which grounds me in my life. Staying active as a volunteer keeps me busy and connected with friends.
- Reaching out to friends occasionally by phone to see how they are coping. This is my way of checking in on them and making sure they are all right. Occasionally sending an e-mail with a photo of birds, sunsets, and other pictures of our beautiful landscapes.
- Retaining membership in the YMCA. The silver sneaker exercise classes are on Zoom but that works (better than no classes). It is worth every penny of my membership fee. The people who teach the classes are fun and very positive. 10:00 each morning for 45 minutes - doable.
- Enjoying lots of chuckles when friends relay humorous e-mails. Friends and laughs are very important!
- Began following the national baking trend and baked several loaves of bread before deciding it wasn't doing much for either my mood or the fit of my jeans. Have substituted jigsaw puzzles, listening to music or podcasts while trying to find the right shapes seems to be a mood enhancing choice.
- One hitch in my activity was a very painful shoulder/neck. Recalled my previous use of a ball in a bag to massage muscles and ligaments against the wall (smooth surface works well). **“Say goodbye to the year 2020. Have fun and have a ball.”**

- During this pandemic we have been fortunate to use FaceTime to have wonderful Game Nights several times a week with our family and discuss daily activities. Zoom helped us connect with friends and organize our day with YMCA Sliver Sneakers classes, WWURA travelogues, ALL history discussion group, and the City Club. We wear masks and keep a social distance while walking with our friends.
- As days shortened and I was more in the dark, I lit candles, turned on more mood lights, inside and out, played CD's, enjoyed sunrises, sunsets and moons. Sometimes just sat!
- Became an unlikely Zoom “guru” in the last few months, allowing me to connect with family all over the world and “meeting” cousins for the first time. “Zooming” allowed me to stay connected with friends. Cooking (new recipes and trying some of Suzanne’s printed in the WWURA Newsletter), reading and walking kept spirits up. "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness" The light will soon emerge.
- Appreciating stillness: “It’s about making ourselves still in the face of uncertainty. It’s about closing our eyes and opening ourselves to the flickering moment and all that actually surrounds us—the good, the bad, the unknown. It’s about sifting it through the net of our undivided attention and honing our sense of what’s beautiful and true and lasting in this world.”

In 370 B.C., Hippocrates alluded to wellness when he stated the following: ***"All parts of the body which have a function, if used in moderation and exercised in labors to which each is accustomed, become healthy and well developed and age slowly. But if unused and left idle, they become liable to disease, defective in growth and age quickly."***