Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Epilepsy Foundation Wellness Institute newsletter, Live Well!

If you are affected by epilepsy, either as one of the 50 million people worldwide who have the disorder or as someone who works with or cares for individuals with epilepsy, then this newsletter is for you. In the pages of this and future issues, we hope to provide you with suggestions, insights, and strategies to improve your overall physical, social, and emotional well-being.

THE WELLNESS INSTITUTE

The Epilepsy Foundation is dedicated to leading the fight to overcome the challenges of living with epilepsy. Although seizures are one of the most debilitating symptoms of epilepsy, they are not the only reason that people with epilepsy have a reduced quality of life. Epilepsy “comorbidities,” such as depression, anxiety, sleep problems, trouble with memory or attention, in addition to medication side effects, can present significant daily challenges.

What is Wellness?

Wellness refers to a healthy balance of mind, body, and feelings, which results in an overall feeling of well-being. Wellness is:

- ideally self-directed
- a conscious and active process
- choices that lead toward a healthy and fulfilling life

UPCOMING WELLNESS EVENTS

Pipeline Conference Community Day, February 2018

The Epilepsy Foundation will hold its Pipeline Conference Community Day on Saturday, February 24 in San Francisco, where people living with epilepsy and their family, friends, and advocates gather for a day of learning, support, and networking. The Wellness Institute will be hosting one of the sessions focused on living with epilepsy and emotional health, where attendees can learn about epilepsy comorbidities such as depression, along with helpful strategies to enhance quality of life. For more information, visit https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/our-programs/2018-epilepsy-pipeline-community-day

National Walk for Epilepsy, April in Washington, DC

Join the Wellness Institute at the National Walk for Epilepsy on April 14, 2018, in Washington, DC; for:

- information on epilepsy wellness
- healthy eating demonstrations
- exercises for attendees

www.walkforepilepsy.com
WORKOUTS TO GET YOU MOVING

Jenny Labaw, Wellness Institute Program Manager and CrossFit Champion, created several videos last year for the Epilepsy Foundation Summer Fitness Challenge. Below are three workouts from the Challenge to strengthen your body.

Sprint Interval Workout

This workout focuses on sprint intervals for all levels. Sprint intervals help you gain muscle strength, increase your body’s ability to burn fat, improve heart health, increase power and athleticism, and decrease risk of falling and tripping. [https://youtu.be/Bf-ccdE5aSU](https://youtu.be/Bf-ccdE5aSU)

30-Minute Circuit Training Workout

This 30-minute circuit training workout involves cardiovascular, strength, and mobility work and is a great general fitness workout that you can do anywhere. [https://youtu.be/L8TD2tygdmc](https://youtu.be/L8TD2tygdmc)

Isometric Strength Training Workout

This workout involves isometric strength training (meaning holding one position), which is good for maintaining strength and can also be done anywhere. [https://youtu.be/Jl2HhnJ9Too](https://youtu.be/Jl2HhnJ9Too)

The Wellness Institute works to overcome the challenges of living with seizures by using a holistic model of wellness that includes eight essential dimensions of life:

- Diet and Nutrition
- Emotional Health
- Independent Living
- Physical Activity
- Education and Employment
- Social Relationships
- Sleep
- Stress Management

These key elements are equally balanced, fit together, and influence each other.

MAKE 2018 THE YEAR OF NEW BEGINNINGS AND BETTER HEALTH

The new year brings a time for new beginnings, new opportunities, and new goals. A time to make positive changes by adopting habits that make us healthier and happier and letting go of those that don’t.

According to [US News](https://www.usnews.com), by February, 80 percent of people have returned to their old ways and unhealthy choices.

Below is a step-by-step guide to heighten your chance of success this year.

Get the Right Mindset to Achieve Change

1. Self-Belief
   This is the most important part of changing your behaviors and motivating yourself to adopt new habits. Truly believe in your change. Believe in WHY you’re trying to change. And believe you can do it! Having a positive mindset will greatly enhance your ability to follow through when you’re faced with temptation.

2. Self-Discipline and Patience
   To really implement change, it takes hard work, consistency, and dedication. People going into change looking for a quick fix are setting themselves up for disappointment. In order to build self-discipline, it takes practice. Just like building muscles, you must work at it. You must be patient and trust the process.
3. Knowing What Kind of “Changer” You Are
Gretchen Rubin provides guidance in identifying what type of changer you are. Are you an abstainer or a moderator?

**Abstainer:** Abstainers stop from doing a habit. You want to stop eating sugar, so you make a commitment to yourself and/or to others to omit sugar intake (or at least for a certain period). You read every food label and make sure that sugar doesn’t enter your mouth. The all-or-nothing approach.

**Moderator:** As opposed to abstainers, people who make change based on moderation don’t eliminate a bad habit from their life, but allow it in far smaller amounts. By knowing that you can indulge in your habit occasionally is enough motivation to keep you on track.

4. Tough Love
Give yourself some tough love by being honest with yourself and aware of the choices you’re making. Are you sabotaging yourself or did you just have a minor slip up? Either way, identify the problem and take that next step forward.

5. Emphasize the Positive
It’s so easy to focus on the negative. Turn off the negative voices. The more optimism you practice, the more it flows into the rest of your life and makes positive change easier to grab and hang onto. Now that you know what it really takes to succeed, below is a step-by-step guide to prep for that success.

To ensure clear, reachable goals, follow the SMART guidelines.

- **Specific:** Simply written and clearly defined
- **Measurable:** Have tangible evidence that you have met the goal
- **Achievable:** Goals to stretch you slightly, but are realistic to achieve
- **Relevant:** Reasonable, realistic, and results-based
- **Time-bound:** Set a time-frame that gives a practical sense of urgency
FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY TO IMPROVE YOUR WELLNESS

Here are five things you can do today to improve your well-being right now.

1. **Set a movement alarm.** Recent studies have shown that too much sitting can lead to diabetes, heart disease, and premature death, even for people who exercise regularly. So, get up every 30 minutes or so during the day and move around to get your heart rate pumping. [https://tinyurl.com/njk633s](https://tinyurl.com/njk633s)

2. **Take a breath, in fact take several long and deep ones.** Researchers have found that practicing deep breathing techniques can encourage your body to exchange oxygen fully, reducing your stress, slowing your heartbeat, and lowering or stabilizing your blood pressure. [https://tinyurl.com/yaxcdkzu](https://tinyurl.com/yaxcdkzu)

3. **Get a good night's sleep.** While most people know the value of sleep and its importance to overall health and well-being, millions don't make sleep a priority or the sleep they get isn’t quality sleep. Just getting a good night's sleep can improve your mood and help you function effectively for the challenges that the day may bring. [https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/healthy-living/sleep-and-wellness](https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/healthy-living/sleep-and-wellness)

4. **Hang out with friends.** Studies show that individuals who have strong social relationships have a 50 percent decreased mortality rate at any given age than those who do not. In addition, recent research conducted by Northwestern University showed that maintaining positive, warm, and trusting friendships might be the key to a slower decline in memory and cognitive functioning. [https://tinyurl.com/hfw6cu7](https://tinyurl.com/hfw6cu7)  [https://tinyurl.com/y8w763a5](https://tinyurl.com/y8w763a5)

5. **Laugh out loud.** Laughter may help individuals cope with pain, gain a positive outlook on life challenges, and improve their overall sense of well-being. Watch a comedy or have lunch with your friends. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2762283/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2762283/)

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7. **Set Smaller Goals**
We are motivated by success. Once you’ve determined your large, overall goals, set up smaller, actionable plans to achieve those goals. Where are you going to start? Check in with yourself regularly (weekly, monthly, daily) to confirm you are still on track and see moments of success as your reach for each big goal.

8. **Share with Your Tribe**
Sharing your goals with those you trust and spend time with can enhance your ability to stick to them. Share your progress with them regularly, ask that they check in with you, or maybe join you in this new habit.

9. **Celebrate!**
Make sure to celebrate the small successes you're having throughout your journey. Make your celebration complement your goals. For example, after eating healthy for one week, treat yourself to a movie with friends rather than a bowl of ice cream.

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