



# The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well  
July 2021

## Social Wellness Month – Healthy Relationships

July is Social Wellness Month. Social wellness means nurturing yourself and your relationships. It also means giving and receiving social support - ensuring that you have friends and other people, including family, to turn to in times of need or crisis to provide a broader perspective and encourage a positive self-image.

According to the University of Minnesota, social support enhances quality of life and provides a buffer against adverse life events. Social support can take different forms:

- **Emotional** support refers to the actions taken to make others feel cared for.
- **Instrumental** support refers to the physical support such as financial support or helping around the house.
- **Informational** support means providing information to people.



Research shows that people who have a strong social network tend to live longer. The heart and blood pressure of people with healthy relationships respond better to stress. Strong social networks are associated with a healthier endocrine system and healthier cardiovascular functioning. According to the National Institutes of Health, social connections might even help protect health and lengthen life.

Social wellness is also being aware of, participating in, and feeling connected to your community. Look for ways to get involved with others:

- Join a group focused on a favorite hobby, such as reading, hiking, painting, or wood carving.
- Take a class in yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity.
- Help with gardening at a community garden or park.
- Volunteer at a school, library, hospital, or place of worship.
- Join a local community group or find other ways to get involved in things you care about.

Of course, with the current COVID-19 pandemic you will want to take proper health precautions. But it is important, especially during this time, to find ways to stay connected with others. If you're finding it hard to adjust to limited social contact, you're not alone. There are still ways to help bridge that distance. Technology today provides many resources that can help. If you are not a techy person, pick up the phone and call a loved one, send greeting cards, or go on walks. Staying socially healthy will benefit both your physical and mental health, and your overall quality of life.

The National Institutes of Health has a variety of resources available to you on "Making Connections", "Self-care for caregivers", etc. These resources are available to you at <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/social-wellness-toolkit>

# Hydration ... it's not just the water you drink.

Staying well hydrated is so important for your overall health. Our body depends on water to survive. Every cell, tissue, and organ in your body needs water to work properly. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, drinking enough water each day is crucial for many reasons: to regulate body temperature, keep joints lubricated, prevent infections, deliver



nutrients to cells, and keep organs functioning properly. Being well-hydrated also improves sleep quality, cognition, and mood. Also, according to the Cleveland Clinic, good hydration supports normal energy levels, decreases risk of kidney stones, prevents constipation, and is associated with a reduction in urinary tract infections, high blood pressure, fatal heart disease, and stroke.

We have all heard that it is important to drink 8 glasses of water a day or at least your body weight in ounces of water. But did you know that you also can improve your hydration and overall health with the foods that you eat?

According to the Institute of Medicine, about one-fifth of our water consumption comes from foods. Here are some hydrating foods with high-water content that will work in tandem with your water bottle to help you stay hydrated.

Excellent hydrating foods include berries, celery, cucumber, grapefruit, lettuce, melon, pear, pineapple, tomatoes, and watermelon. The following foods contain the highest amount of water:

- cucumber and zucchini are both about 95% water
- watermelon is 92% water
- strawberries are 91%
- cantaloupe is 90%

Yes, it is still important to drink plenty of water, but you may also include fruits and vegetables to boost your hydration level even more and add a tasty bunch of necessary nutrients to your diet.

---

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

1-800-343-3822 | TDD 1-800-448-1823 | [www.AWPnow.com](http://www.AWPnow.com)

*Here for you as life happens*

# Blueberry Barbecued Chicken

## Ingredients

- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups frozen wild blueberries
- ¼ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ cup dark brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts



## Preparation

1. Prepare and heat grill.
2. On a stove, heat a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add olive oil and sauté onion for 2 minutes, or until translucent. Add blueberries, ketchup, balsamic vinegar, brown sugar, and salt. Stir well. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4 minutes.
3. Use an immersion blender (or transfer to a blender) to blend until smooth. Transfer ½ cup of sauce to one bowl and reserve for serving. Transfer remaining sauce to a second bowl for grilling.
4. Pound chicken breasts to flatten to ½-inch thickness. Place flattened chicken breasts on prepared grill. Cook for 5 minutes on one side, turn and grill another 5 minutes.
5. Spread blueberry barbecue sauce evenly over chicken; grill 1 minute.
6. Turn chicken and spoon larger portion of sauce evenly over other side; grill 1 minute longer. Chicken is cooked when internal temperature reaches 165°F.
7. Serve with reserved ½ cup blueberry barbecue sauce.

## Health Tip:

### Healthy Social Media Use

Social Media is part of most people's everyday lives. Here are some tips to use it in a healthy way:

- Monitor screen time and set limits
- Control social media feeds
- Listen to podcasts for a change
- Pay attention to your workload and selfcare needs

**Action:** *Set regular times to take breaks from social media throughout the year.*

## POSITIVE WAYS TO ACCEPT CRITICISM

Do you hate being criticized even when you know you've made a mistake? If so, it's no wonder—criticism can make people feel incompetent, angry, and just plain awful. How do you, personally, respond to criticism? Do you make excuses or lash back with criticism?

"This fight-or-flight response is natural and common, but it isn't very productive. It cuts off communication, often just when it's needed most," says Jean Lebedun, Ph.D., author of the video program *The Art of Criticism: Giving and Taking*.



Many supervisors don't give criticism in a tactful manner. Nevertheless, you should accept criticism so you can learn from your mistakes. But don't fret; it'll be easier when you use Dr. Lebedun's "4-A Formula: Anticipate, Ask questions, Agree with something, and Analyze."

### Anticipate

Accept the fact that everyone makes mistakes and that you'll probably be criticized for yours. That way, criticism won't come as a surprise.

"You anticipate criticism by asking yourself, 'What can I learn from this criticism?' Then, whenever you feel yourself growing defensive or getting angry, you repeat the question 'What can I learn?'" advises Dr. Lebedun.

Here's another way to anticipate: Take the wind out of the sails of criticism by admitting your mistake first, before your supervisor has an opportunity to say anything to you. This makes your supervisor's job easier and makes you appear more professional.

### Ask Questions

Many times, people who criticize are letting off steam and may be exaggerating the problem. This is especially true when the criticism contains the words "always" and "never." Therefore, it's important to pinpoint the criticism by asking questions like these: "What part of the report didn't you like?" "What aspect of my attitude makes life at work difficult for you?" "Could you give me an example?"

Asking questions accomplishes two things: It gives you specific information on how you can improve, and it teaches people they'll have to be specific when they criticize you.

### Agree with Something

When faced with criticism, most people focus on the part of the negative feedback that may not be true and ignore the rest. This doesn't solve any problems, and you don't learn anything.

When you agree with one part of the criticism, you become open to learning. An easy way to agree is to say something like this: "You might be right; my report doesn't have all the details."

"You don't have to agree with everything; even agreeing with one small aspect of the criticism will create an atmosphere of teamwork," says Dr. Lebedun. "The focus then can become how you'll work together to solve a problem, which will lessen your feeling of being attacked."

### Analyze

Finally, take a break and evaluate what you've heard.

You need time to process the information, determine if it's a valid criticism, and decide what you'll do to solve the problem or correct the mistake. If this is a complaint you've heard repeatedly, you should think about what you can learn from the situation so it doesn't happen again.

The benefits of the 4-A Formula are that you'll look for solutions rather than excuses and you'll be in control of your emotions, Dr. Lebedun says. "You'll also appear more professional."



## IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Successful communication is a two-way street. When someone speaks to you, you should listen and create a dialogue. As you listen and converse, your goal should be understanding, not winning or being right.

If you're like most people, however, you have undeveloped listening skills.

"Listening is the art of truly hearing what a person is trying to say, not just what's said. The best listeners hear the words and see the body language so they capture the whole message," says Anne Warfield, president of Impression Management Professionals in Minneapolis, and author of "Communicating More Effectively."



Ms. Warfield offers these suggestions on how to improve your listening skills.

### Listen actively

If you learn to use active listening skills to hear and comprehend the thoughts, feelings and concerns behind the words, you'll make a speaker feel respected and also create an understanding that leads to progress and mutual benefit.

"Active listening takes concentration, effort and the ability to put your own agenda aside, for the moment, so you can understand the other person's viewpoint," Ms. Warfield says.

### Steps to active listening

Stop whatever you're doing and give your full attention to the speaker. This shows respect and allows you to view body language. To demonstrate your interest, lean forward, look directly at the other person, nod and make appropriate comments about what he or she says.

#### **What to listen for:**

- Words. Is the message clear and concise? What are the words alone trying to say?
- Tone of voice. The tone of someone's voice reflects the person's emotional state. Does the tone sound hostile or nervous, or does it sound friendly, relaxed and sincere?
- Pitch. A high-pitched voice usually indicates nervousness, fear or anxiety. A lower pitch signifies confidence.
- Pace. People usually vary in the speed of their speech.

#### **Body language to look for:**

- Eyes. Good eye contact signifies honesty and confidence. To create good eye contact, position yourself so you're at about the same eye level as the other person.
- Facial expression. A genuine smile expresses friendship, approval and relaxation. Sullen looks represent disinterest, disapproval or concern. Frowning conveys disapproval or disbelief.
- Posture. Standing tall and straight with arms relaxed at the side indicates confidence, while sloped shoulders suggest low self-esteem. Crossed arms signal a person's anger or defensiveness.

### Rating your listening skills

"To find out how well you listen, repeat what you think the other person said before you respond to it," says Ms. Warfield. "If people correct you more than 20 percent of the time, you hear what you want to hear, not what's said."

Listening actively pays off because mutual understanding in communication is essential for success, not only in your career, but also in your personal life.



## MEDIA INTELLIGENCE: SOCIAL NETWORKING ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

While networking has been a useful activity since people first began interacting with each other, Internet-based social networking is a direct result of the explosive technological advancement of the late-20th and early-21st centuries. As computers became more common in the home and telecommunications technologies expanded, more and more users began taking advantage of new services that gave them access to the earliest digital domains and the communities that developed there.

In recent years, social networks have become less about building social connections and more about generating a steady level of user engagement for advertisers who pay social media companies to help them create visibility. This engagement is used to provide advertising revenue that can fund the operations of a social network, and it creates a direct stream of personal information that social media companies mine and sell to others for added profit. Every like, follow, post, and share is monitored, stored, categorized, and studied. As recent media reports have highlighted, this collection and sharing of personal information may happen without your knowledge or consent and can have disastrous consequences.

Social media engagement is a big business, and keeping you and your follower list online and active every day is a critical part of the business strategy. To keep you engaged, many companies are willing to manipulate what you see and what you post to create an emotional response that keeps you returning to their services. And that can have both short-term and long-term consequences for users, including increased anxiety, depression, and FOMO (fear of missing out).

In order to separate yourself from the manipulative effects of social media and to reduce the likelihood that your personal information will be compromised, follow these five recommendations:

1. Expect that everything you do online—either on a laptop, tablet, or smartphone—is being monitored, recorded, and shared. If you receive targeted advertising while visiting websites or in your email's inbox, you can see how your Web activity is already being used to track your interests and presence online.
2. Review and set stricter Privacy Settings for any Web browsers or social media applications you use on a regular basis. Increasing these settings to higher levels can give you greater control over what is reported and shared, as well as how long third-party data collectors and websites can have access to your information and activities.
3. Think before you post. Once you post something online, you no longer have any control over where it is seen, shared, stored, or used. Your posts, responses, photos, and videos may exist even after you delete them and can be shared by others in ways you may not be able to stop. This can impact your future and affect your relationships, career goals, and sense of safety and security.
4. Don't openly post sensitive or private information online—even in your direct messages. The more you post online about your life and activities, the easier it becomes for others to piece together who you are, where you live, where you like to spend your time, and when you're away from home, which can compromise your life.
5. Take a break from your social networks. Social media companies want you to stay online all of the time. By choosing one day each week to turn off your networks and focus on what makes you happy in your life, you disengage from the pace and control social networks want to exert over you that may not always be to your benefit.



Life Advantages, LLC © 2021



... Visit Your EAP Website Today

[awpnow.com](http://awpnow.com)

*Optimized for all devices including: desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones and more.*

It is now easier than ever to access the online resources provided by your EAP, Alliance Work Partners.

Contact your Account Manager for log-in instructions

[AM@alliancewp.com](mailto:AM@alliancewp.com) | 888-327-4636

# National Blueberry Month

In July 2003 the United States Department of Agriculture proclaimed that July is National Blueberry Month in the USA! Canada also made a Royal Proclamation for Blueberry Month in August! Blueberry festivals are held all around the world to celebrate this wonderful berry. These small, round berries are about 0.2–0.6 inches (5–16 mm) in diameter, and their color can range from blue to purple. Different kinds of blueberries exist, so their appearance may vary slightly.



Blueberries are thought of as a uniquely American fruit, but there are very similar berries in other countries. A huckleberry or Saskatoon, found in Canada and parts of the U.S. is related to the blueberry. In the UK, you may find a whorlberry or whortleberry and, in Scotland, the blueberry is popular. And throughout much of Europe, a bilberry. Bilberries are very dark blue berries about half as big as blueberries (think a pea). They are typically very tart / sour and have just a touch of sweetness, with yellowish insides.

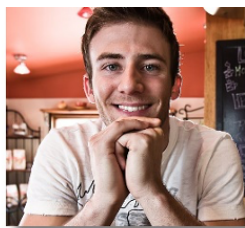
Blueberries are a very popular, tasty fruit native to North America but grown commercially across the Americas and Europe. They are low in calories and incredibly healthy, potentially regulating blood sugar levels and promoting heart and brain health. Often marketed as a superfood, blueberries are an excellent source of several vitamins, beneficial plant compounds, and antioxidants. Blueberries are low in calories and fat yet provide decent amounts of healthy fiber.

A 3.5-ounce (100-gram) serving of raw blueberries has:

- **Calories:** 57
- **Water:** 84%
- **Protein:** 0.7 grams
- **Carbs:** 14.5 grams
- **Sugar:** 10 grams
- **Fiber:** 2.4 grams
- **Fat:** 0.3 grams

Blueberries have a pleasant, sweet taste and are often eaten fresh but may also be frozen or juiced. They can be used in a variety of baked goods, jams, and jellies, as well as for flavorings. Enjoy this superfood in a variety of ways this summer and throughout the year.

## Develop the Habit of Active Listening



"Active listening" is the practice of engaging with a speaker using techniques of listening that maximize understanding. The goal is more complete communication. Active

listening is conscious and purposeful. The skill is often taught in couples counseling because it reduces misunderstandings, conflicts, and frustration; increases closeness; and helps people solve problems faster. Obviously, active listening has immense value in the workplace. Do you know how to actively listen? To practice active listening, decide to be neutral and nonjudgmental when the speaker begins. Don't interrupt. Periodically reflect back your understanding. Don't "fill the silence" when the speaker pauses. Use nonverbal behaviors to show you're listening and engaged. Finally, ask for clarification if needed, and summarize what you heard.

## Caregiving Apps Make It Easier



Being a caregiver is about more than grocery shopping and providing companionship. It's a constant stream of issues, concerns, interruptions, and crises related to medications, surgeries, rehabilitation, appointments, and dozens of personal care issues. It can equate to an exhausting second job. If you're a caregiver, discover apps that can help you reduce the stress of keeping up with it all. Start by taking a look at six such apps at [www.caring.com/caregivers/caregiver-support](http://www.caring.com/caregivers/caregiver-support). You will find more caregiving apps by Google-searching for "list of all caregiving apps."

## Can Exercise Prevent the Worst of COVID-19 Illness?

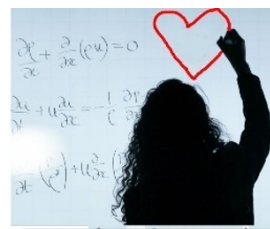


Here's another reason to exercise—surviving COVID-19 or a similar illness in the future. A study of nearly 50,000 people hospitalized for COVID-19 examined those who were consistently physically active,

especially with regard to the officially recommended 150 minutes per week. Patients who were *not* consistently active had a greater risk of hospitalization and death. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of systemic inflammation. It's this inflammation that makes the lungs more vulnerable to damage caused by COVID-19.

Exercise also improves heart health, lung capacity, and chest wall strength! Result: Reduced risk for the worst outcome. *Source: www.bjism.bmj.com [search: physical inactivity covid].*

## Finding Your Emotional Intelligence Gap



Emotional intelligence (EI or EQ) is your ability to identify, understand, and "regulate" or control emotions. This includes the ability to respond to feeling states in ways

that are helpful or constructive. The result: You communicate more effectively, demonstrate empathy, and solve problems more successfully. As with IQ, it's possible to measure EI, but the score is not as important as discovering areas where you can make improvements to help yourself personally and professionally. Many tests are job-specific for leadership, teaching, caregiving, and even dentistry! Questions are usually very similar. Discover EI tests online, but add "pdf" to your search to discover one you can print. *Example: "EI test PDF". Example: www.nodc.org/images/stories/2018/Handouts/EI-ASSESSMENT.pdf*





## Equity in the Workplace: What's Your Role?



Workplace equity means having a workplace where everyone feels valued, is treated fairly, and is empowered to contribute and to pursue happiness in their job.

Workplace equity is a goal that requires everyone's participation so opportunity for all becomes reality. What's your role? Here are five ways that you, as a coworker, can help bring equity to your workplace. 1) Value diversity. Diverse workplaces enhance businesses and help them compete in an increasingly diverse world-of-work that expects and rewards workplace equity. See diversity as a plus for any organization. 2) Value inclusion. Inclusion means that differences among employees aren't cause for discrimination—people feel equally welcomed and valued for their contributions. 3) "Step in." When you witness values of inclusiveness, equality, respect, or equal opportunity being overlooked or dismissed, be the one who says, "Can we talk about \_\_\_\_ in this situation?" 4) Don't turn away or dismiss slights or unintentional (indirect) discrimination against others. Those who are victims of discrimination often brush off or set aside these micro-aggressions. 5) Know your biases and mind your language. Everyone has biases, but consider how these biases are demonstrated in private conversations with close friends, and how they may emerge within the workplace and community at large. Workplace equity is an evolving value and area of study for employers and work organizations. The misconception among many employees is that the responsibility for equity lies solely with management and the organization's policies. Ultimately, however, it is the employee-to-employee interaction level that determines whether the goal is realized. This is the business case for understanding and promoting workplace equity. Awareness Challenge: Examine this resource and discuss it with your workgroup: [www.sph.umn.edu](http://www.sph.umn.edu) [search "micro-aggression examples"].

## Morning Grogginess?

### Try Avoiding the Snooze Button



It may sound like too much to bear, but giving up the snooze button as you struggle to get out of bed might help eliminate the morning grogginess and excessive daytime sleepiness you experience. Snooze buttons can create a condition called "fragmented sleep," as they interrupt REM sleep, which is the restorative part of your sleep cycle. Research shows fragmented sleep can produce grogginess that might linger for hours. Also, consider visiting your doctor to rule out a sleep disorder. Learn more: [www.newsroom.clevelandclinic.org](http://www.newsroom.clevelandclinic.org) [search "snooze button"].

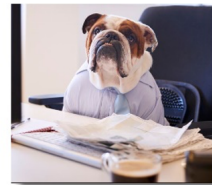
## Diagnosing Compulsive Buying-Spending Disorder



A lack of international consensus by experts on the diagnostic criteria for compulsive buying (spending) disorder led to research, with findings released in May 2021. The American Psychiatric Association still

does not consider compulsive shopping an addiction or a behavioral disorder. Still, after interviews with experts in 35 countries, at least two characteristics were described as "universally accepted": excessive purchasing of items without using them for their intended purpose (think unopened boxes of deliveries, loads of clothes in a closet with price tags still attached, etc.) and shopping as a means to positively affect or elevate one's mood. It is hoped that this international consensus will lead to more studied and accepted criteria, lessen denial, and increase self-diagnosis by those who suffer with a shopping addiction. Do you or a loved one experience these behaviors? Not sure? Start with your EAP or a professional counselor to explore more. Source: [www.news-medical.net](http://www.news-medical.net) [search: compulsive buying].

## New Stress of Going Back to Work



Have you been asked to return to your job on-site after working at home remotely for the past year? Perhaps you kept your fingers crossed hoping your remote job would be the new normal into the

future with newly established family routines, no commute, a home office that started to feel ideal, and a feeling of independence you cherished. Many employees are excited about returning to work, but not everyone feels this way. Talk with your EAP about how to cope with the stress of change and disappointment and how to reconnect so you can become your most productive self and experience the job satisfaction you want.

---

We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

To access your EAP services  
1-800-343-3822 | TDD 1-800-448-1823  
[www.AWPnow.com](http://www.AWPnow.com)

*Here for you as life happens ...*

