

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

BENEFITS WELLNESS WORKLIFE  
[www.gvsu.edu/healthwellness](http://www.gvsu.edu/healthwellness)



## Success Story: Chris DeMull and Rita Kohrman

Christine DeMull, Controller's Office Assistant, and Rita Kohrman, Education and Juvenile Literature Librarian, have different motivations towards fitness and health, which match their different personalities. But even though they are opposites in many ways, they make for great workout partners.

*Rita (left) and Chris have been playing racquetball for 15 years*

Chris and Rita met at Curves in 2001 and have been friends ever since. Chris, as the more introverted of the two, was initially intimidated by the fieldhouse. But the free membership became too enticing, so she stopped attending Curves and immediately started playing racquetball. "I tried it out just to see if I could do it." Then after a while she thought, "It would be more fun if I played with

someone." She asked Rita to join, and so began their partnership.

They have been playing racquetball once a week for about 15 years, and they emphasize on the play because neither likes to keep score. They always meet in the morning when the fieldhouse isn't as busy, and there are fewer excuses not to go. Chris says, "It's hard to find something to not get me here in the morning," and she wanted to play with someone for the fun of it, and "[Rita] was accepting of that."

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*"If you find the right exercise partner, it makes a world of difference"*

*—Rita*

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In addition to racquetball, they keep moving by lifting weights - sometimes together, and other times they go their separate ways. But Rita says, "Knowing that she's there, even if we're not exercising together, has often times been [my motivation]. I internally say, 'she's my accountability.'"

And Rita thrives on the social aspect of exercise. She has participated in group exercise classes and enjoys the lunchtime yoga classes on the Pew Campus, she regularly walks the stairs with a coworker in the Mary Idema Pew Library, and even began working with an athletic trainer to help her prepare for her bucket list adventure: hiking the Appalachian Trail. Rita found it's easier for her when someone is able to provide structure, and she found that in Chris.

Meanwhile, Chris usually prefers to work out solo because of her strong internal motivation. She says of group exercise, "It's hard for me to follow watching someone else, and I don't feel like I can concentrate," whereas Rita says, "I put more into it when I'm in a group, and I seem to perform better."

Their takes on exercise laments that each person just has to find what's right for them, and they both advise everyone to keep trying and to be persistent. "Some days the accomplishment is just getting here," Chris says, who also suggests viewing any kind of movement as an accomplishment. Finding a workout partner can change your outlook on exercise and make it more enjoyable, giving you that extra push to get moving. Whether you are more of a Chris or a Rita, it's important to "find those people you can sync up with," Rita says. "[They will] motivate you and keep your passion going."

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## Pedometer

### Challenge Winners

Congratulations to everyone who participated in the Pedometer Challenge this year!

The first place team is Happy Soles :) who walked 8,210,772 steps for a total of 4,105 miles, and Amy Bross was the individual with the most steps at 2,605,025 steps for a total of 1,303 miles.

View full results on the [Pedometer Challenge webpage](#).

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## How to Stay Healthy During Flu Season

Taking preventive measures is the best way to combat illness during flu season. Getting a flu shot is your best defense, but there are other ways to keep your immune system strong to fight off unwanted germs:

- Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, being around others who are ill, and before eating

- Avoid sharing objects
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes
- Get enough sleep
- Reduce stress as much as possible
- Eat well and exercise regularly
- And remember if you do become sick, please stay home!

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## Mindful Grieving and Gratitude

Elisa Salazar, LMSW, GVSU Work Life Consultant

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*"I'm gonna cry all alone in this room. Don't ask me why, it's just that I need to. I'll feel the sorrow and I'll feel the pain. I will be grateful at the end of the day." – May Erlewine, Grateful*

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- *How do I deal with the sadness, anger, and hurt that I am experiencing?*
- *How do I explore my emotions so I come out stronger and grow from my difficult experiences?*

### 1. Create space for emotional exploration

Difficult emotions, grief, sadness, and anger, are a part of the human experience. Creating time and space for the exploration is not just a desirable outcome but a NEED in order to process and overcome difficult emotions. Processing emotions is like taking a journey; there are different steps and phases that progress. As C.S. Lewis says in *A Grief Observed*, "I thought I could describe a state; make a map of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process."

Creating space for emotional exploration is done by mindfully feeling all emotions. It may seem odd, but even setting aside 15 minutes a day to worry, be sad, feel angry, or grieve will provide much needed relief because the feelings will be heard and approached. Approaching leads to progression in the healing process. Feelings tell you things and feelings motivate. Taking time to mindfully sit with the feelings and listen to them will provide a healthy outlet for the emotions and there will be a greater sense of peace throughout the day.

### 2. Use symbols

Sitting with emotions without purpose will not necessarily lead to resolution and healing. Once there is a certain level of comfort with allowing emotions to come and go, using symbols can give a sense of purpose to the suffering. Symbols can

be used to “trick” your mind into approaching and overcoming emotions. Using symbols to set an intentional or “emotional goal” provides a purpose to suffering.

*Example with grief:* say you are holding on to a box of old clothes from a loved one who passed and looking at the box causes a lot of pain. Perhaps you could write the word “peace” or “healing” on the box as a reminder of what you want to achieve. Over time the word will feel real and that will be an indicator that it is time to “let go,” whether it be physically or emotionally. Rather than let the trigger cause negative feelings, let it be a reminder that peace and healing are what you are working for and those difficult emotions you are feeling have a purpose. You can set yourself up to reach an emotional goal of peace or healing by holding fast to these kinds of symbols.

*Example with anger:* Change the cell phone name to “not worth it” or “self-control.” That way there is an instant reframe and it will help to slowly breakdown the negative connotation.

### 3. Find healthy outlets A.K.A. get it out!

Years of holding in emotions has been proven to cause physical and chronic mental health issues. Each individual has multiple outlets that will help them feel relief from emotional suffering. Some examples are drawing, writing, singing, exercising, dancing, crying, and talking. Emotions carry energy and it is crucial to find a healthy outlet for that energy. Many people find therapy helpful because there is a built in space to feel emotions and get them out. Many people will find different things help depending on the moment, and that is okay. Finding healthy outlets to get the emotional energy out and be gentle to yourself in your emotional suffering. Plan healthy outlets around times that are emotionally draining to combat any negativity with wellness.

Many times processing feelings will lead to some beautiful and inspirational ideas, such as starting a non-profit in a loved one’s honor or making personal life changes to honor your difficult experience. That is when you know you are deep in the healing process and are close to the end of your emotional journey.

At the end of the day you will be stronger and better from your adversity and can begin to feel a sense of gratitude for your experience and the growth that came out of it.

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## Winter Event Guide

Check out the many events and resources available to keep you healthy and well during the winter months. Mark your calendars for the upcoming programs, challenges, workshops, and more from the [Winter Event Guide](#).

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