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HEALTH & WELLNESS

BENEFITS WELLNESS WORKLIFE

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Grand Valley State University Human Resources

Success Story:

Scott Ayotte



Scott Ayotte, Director of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, grew up in a household where exercise and overall health wasn't a priority. As a result, his family received a wake-up call about 6 years ago when his father had a stroke. This "impacted the entire family when it comes to lifestyles and healthy choices. I was able to see firsthand what some of the consequences are of certain lifestyles. It really shocked the conscience."

His wife Sarah works in healthcare, so Scott also has an outside influence contributing to his health decisions. From these experiences, he has learned to "recognize how important health really is, and to enjoy the highest quality of life that you can, because you only get one."

Scott has since made his fitness and nutrition choices a habit. He goes to the rec center first thing in the morning because "no student in their right mind is going to get up that early to work out." Diet plays an important role as well, although "kale is not going to happen. I don't understand it," he laughs admittedly. However, "There are alternatives to the kale smoothie," so it's important to choose what works for you.

That intentionality is important when it comes to health. There is a "conscious effort between me and my wife keeping each other accountable to get up and go work out." He explains that it was a "rough transition" to exercise in the morning, and is still difficult sometimes, but that the benefits outweigh the costs.

"[Health] is a marathon, not a sprint. Recognize that it's going to be a process."

While important, Scott believes that diet and exercise aren't enough. "I look at mind, body, and spirit being an interconnected system. Without a healthy mind, it's going to [negatively] impact the body and emotional well-being." He and Sarah make it a point to incorporate mindfulness in the forms of meditation and gratitude. "We never ask, 'How was your day?' [Instead] we'll ask, 'What made you happy?' or 'What made you smile?'"

Reframing the question acts as a reminder for them to focus on the good things. He adds that having a strong support system, like his wife and friends, supports a positive mindset.

But when life inevitably gets difficult, “I look at it from an athletic perspective. There are going to be some points throughout the year or even day where you need to just sit on the bench for a little while and rest up – physically, emotionally, spiritually, whatever it may be.”

He tries his best to live his life through "the immortal words of 21st century philosopher, Pitbull: any day above ground is a great day," and adds, "It’s never too late to get started on a healthier mind and body, one day at a time.”

Read more success stories here.

The New Tax Overhaul: What Does This Mean for You?



For the first time in over 30 years, there has been a tax overhaul and the new provisions may impact you. Find out more information about the tax reform webinar, and keep your financial goals on track with TIAA’s live webinars in February.

Join Fidelity for two free webcasts:
During Be in the Financial Front Seat, you’ll learn four financial questions to ask yourself each year, while Getting More out of Social Security will cover claiming strategies—including options if you’re divorced or widowed. Learn more and reserve your spot today.



Protect Women's Hearts

GO RED is a campaign by the American Heart Association to raise awareness that heart disease and stroke are among the leading killers of women.

How can you help protect women's hearts?
Donate to the cause:

1. WEAR RED and donate to the cause = FREE faculty and staff group exercise entry* Feb 2-Feb 9
2. Donate online: www.heart.org/gvsu or purchase a paper heart from a participating GVSU department through Feb 28

   **Faculty and staff who wear red to attend any faculty and staff group exercise class offered by Human Resources. A card with a donation link will be provided to participants. Participants must sign a waiver to participate in the class. Some classes may be subject to space limitations. Drop in participation is first come first serve.*

Find out more information about the national campaign and find if you're at-risk at the Go Red for Women website.

Developing the Anchor Within: Two Exercises in Self-Love

Elisa Salazar, LMSW, GVSU Work Life Consultant

How do I develop internal strength?
How do I increase self-love?



How do I become more connected to myself?

Often times we define our worth and value by how effective we are at work, how much we do for our children, how we provide for our families, or even how many tasks we accomplish. When we experience any intense emotion like anxiety, anger, or betrayal, our minds become like floating objects and we begin to feel disconnected from ourselves. Our bodies can become disoriented and we feel consumed by the emotion. When we place our value on these other things, we are on shaky ground.

In reality, our worth is in being, not doing. Despite how external forces may influence us, we can be empowered by holding on to deep personal love, like an anchor within us to keep us stable. Learning to listen and trust yourself fosters self-love and is the ultimate form of self-respect. There are some practical and tangible exercises that will increase self-awareness and encourage self-love.

1 - Name three people.

This is an exercise that can help define those values you are drawn to and foster a deeper personal connection. This exercise will increase your awareness of what qualities you are thirsty for and what would be impactful for you in the moment. This is an especially helpful tool if a person is experiencing complacency.

1. Think of three people who you admire. These could include celebrities, athletes, or family members.
2. Hold them in your mind and list all the qualities you admire.
3. Use the list and look at how you spend your time, energy, and resources.

Interestingly, the list you generate is like shining a flashlight on the values and skills you aspire to have in your own life. You can then begin to look for opportunities to expand these values and skills through personal coaching or counseling. Perhaps you admire someone who speaks eloquently and you want more of that in your life. You could begin spending time with others who possess this quality, take a class to develop this skill, or set an intention to act more in that manner throughout the day. It is great to get feedback from others and it is also a very loving gesture to look within yourself for the same feedback.

2 - Breathe in ____, breathe out ____.

This is a great exercise for learning how to give yourself what you need. It can be a calming and grounding exercise in times of stress. The “pre-work” to this exercise, is taking a moment to ask yourself, "what do I want or need more of in life?" For example: love, healing, forgiveness, financial freedom, discipline, contentment, peace, or strength.

1. To start the exercise, breathe in the word that represents what you want. You can even nod slightly, indicating your confirmation of taking this word in.

2. Then consider the opposite, such as hate, resentment, fear, uncertainty, pain, debt, or anger. Then breathe that out, gently shaking your head “no.”

Once in a groove a challenge is to let your mind wander. Maybe you started with healing and love pops into your mind. Go there for a few rounds, then maybe self-control comes up. When you allow your mind to wander, things from your heart will begin to surface to tell you what it needs.

These are tangible personal exercises in self-love, self-validation, and fostering a loving connection with yourself. This awareness and intentionality will spill over to your choices, reactions to difficult situations, and will push you toward functional healthy outlets. The more these are built into your routine, the more growth and self-validation you will have to anchor within you, and a deep authentic internal trust is the best guide.

Additional resources to support good emotional health and well-being

1 Campus Drive 1090 James H. Zumberge Hall Allendale, MI 49401

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