WELLNESS

It’s a term we hear often these days, but what does it really mean? It goes far beyond simply the absence of illness, and indeed beyond physical health. True wellness accounts for well-being in all aspects of our lives. In its modern form, wellness includes multiple areas of well-being, including physical, social, community, and a sense of purpose. Wellness is not something you either achieve or don’t—it is recognizing your capacity right where you are, and moving forward to be the very best you can be in that moment. Wellness is a concept that allows two seemingly contradictory facts to be true at the same time. Chronic illness and joyful relationships. Sadness and physical strength. Anxiety and purpose. Wellness recognizes all aspects of the self. We strive to be well in each aspect to the extent possible at that time and find communities that value and support our wellness.

Vice President for Student Affairs Ainsley Carry has an ambitious goal for USC: to become the healthiest university campus in America. “We have been thinking about strategic approaches to address issues of health and wellness in the most comprehensive sense, in body, mind and spirit,” he says. That goes far beyond medical care available at the Engemann Student Health Center, he said, to include resources to support wellness in all aspects of student life. “We take a holistic look at student life, and try to make sure students have outlets for all the components.”

Each of us must take responsibility for our own wellness, which takes work—no one can do it for us. And college is the best time to form the habits that will help you care for yourself throughout your life. From eating well to managing stress to finding a sense of purpose, you have a wealth of resources to support you right here on campus.
PHYSICAL HEALTH

All areas of wellness are compromised if the body is neglected. Students often sacrifice their physical wellness under pressure to perform academically: by drinking too much caffeine, not getting enough sleep, and not taking care of their basic health. Protecting yourself during sex is essential to staying healthy. And contrary to common belief, alcohol actually induces and increases stress. Exercise is a great stress reducer that does more than support heart health and strengthen the body; it supports mental health, too, and provides opportunities to connect with others, which benefits social wellness.

Explore your wellness around alcohol use with BASICS, a confidential consult through the Office for Wellness and Health Promotion (OWHP), in ESHC 203. OWHP has a wealth of resources, safer sex supplies and Wellness Advocates available to answer your questions.

Get vaccinated. If you’re traveling abroad, visit the Travel Clinic in the Engemann Student Health Center at least 3 months before you go.

Exercise improves learning, mental performance, memory, and helps fight against stress, depression, anxiety and brain aging.

MINDFULNESS

Spiritual or soul-nourishing practices don’t have to be religious. Mindfulness meditation is a secular practice that allows you to cultivate awareness and compassion. Plus, evidence for the health and wellness benefits of mindfulness keeps piling up. USC has made a major commitment to the study and practice of mindfulness with Mindful USC, which offers free 8-week training courses for students, faculty and staff. And all Trojans are welcome to Meditation Mondays at noon in ESHC 304.

MEDITATE
Silently, or with a guided visualization.

PRACTICE
Yoga or tai chi.

BREATHE
Sit or lie down comfortably. Mentally scan each area of your body and intentionally release any existing tension. Breathe deeply and slowly.

SLOW DOWN THE CHOW DOWN
Allow extra time to prepare, select, cut and even chew your food. Signal to your body that it’s OK to settle down into digestion mode and savor each bite.

Yoga or tai chi.
One way that everyone can build resilience is to practice healthy sleep habits. Yet more than a quarter of USC students reported feeling tired 5 to 7 days out of the past week, according to the 2014 National College Health Assessment Report. But there are a number of ways to improve sleep quality as well as quantity. A helpful rule of thumb: reserve your bed exclusively for the three S’s: sleep, sickness and sex.

**SLEEP**

- Get up at the same time each day and keep your room at a constant temperature.
- Take a workshop to improve your sleep quality in the Stress Relief Clinic in ESHC 304.
- Don’t bring your schoolwork or phone to bed with you.
- Pick up earplugs and a sleep mask in the Wellness Lounge in ESHC 205.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evenings.

**FOOD**

Eating well means different things to different people, but it’s another area that is central to wellness. Not only what you eat, but when, how, where and with whom you eat all affect your wellness. For tips on making solid choices at the dining hall, when stocking the mini-fridge, or eating on a budget, visit choosemyplate.gov/college-resources and check out the Trojan Farmers Market every Wednesday in McCarthy Quad for fresh, locally grown food.

- **EAT MINDFULLY**
  Pay attention to how your body responds as you eat.

- **EAT REGULARLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY**
  You will run out of energy and focus with just one or two meals a day.

- **BALANCE NUTRIENTS IN EACH MEAL**
  Carbohydrates provide immediate energy for about an hour. Fat and protein kick in later to provide energy when the carb fuel runs out.

- **EAT MINDFULLY**
  Pay attention to how your body responds as you eat.
Adapting to college life can be stressful. It’s important to remember that you are not alone in this struggle, and to seek out social connections. Some students have a hard time letting their guard down, reaching out for support, or sharing with peers. In fact, some students act like things are going well when they’re not. If stress feels overwhelming, seek help, and if you know someone struggling, share your concerns through Trojans Care 4 Trojans at bit.ly/tc4t.

Stress can be beneficial and heighten performance, but just as important as the “fight or flight” response is the “rest and digest” state, which returns the body to recovery and regular function.

If stress becomes a disruptive factor in your daily activities, make an appointment with Student Counseling at (213) 740-7711 (UPC) or (323) 442-5631 (HSC).

Three ways to manage occasional stress:

**S.T.O.P.** Stop: Take a few breaths, observe the present, and proceed with a positive activity.

**HALF-SMILE** Holding a half-smile for 10 minutes positively impacts your mood.

**MANTRA** Create a simple, affirmative saying. Repeat it during times of stress and focus on the meaning of the words. For example, “I have enough, I do enough, and I am enough.”

One of the greatest challenges for every human is to find meaning and purpose in life, and it is important to today’s students. Many want a meaningful career and an authentic life. College is a time for you to explore what inspires you, and gives you personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement. It is a place where you can find a community that shares your interests, and discover yourself in the process.

**BEGIN YOUR PATH**

- Attend a career workshop
- Call a friend & be real
- Volunteer in the local community
- Explore other cultures
- Hike Runyon Canyon
- Volunteer in the local community
- It’s OK to ask for help

**FIND SUPPORT**

- Volunteer in the local community
- Explore other cultures
- Find a friend & be real
- Try meditation
- Call the Office of Religious Life at URC 106 (UPC) and McKibben Hall 160 (HSC)

**FIND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

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**SENSE OF PURPOSE**

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