

Living Well

Promoting compassion,
collaboration and
communication because care
is “better together”.



Winter, 2016.

Booking has changed:

Book with Robin our physio by
calling (902) 229-9041 or see
info@stammsomatics.com

Erin can be booked for
nutritional counseling by calling
our main number. Visit
www.erinmacraenutrition.com

Book a massage with Jeannie
by visiting info@myobalance.ca

Pamela is available by calling
(902) 489-0944 or by email:
counsellingwithpam@gmail.com

Dr. Patriquin (902) 406-1500 or
see website for info re: online
booking.

Sharing is Caring

The more I do this, the more I love it! This newsletter is a wonderful collaborative effort and I thank the Living Well practitioners for their contributions to the newsletter but more importantly for being patient with change and helping contribute the creation of a positive, welcoming, warm, environment at our center. I have a family home but it's a pleasure to refer to Living Well as my “work home”.

Each and every one of us has something unique and significant to contribute to the care of our patients but the reality is that care is better when shared. It is indeed “better together” for patients, providers and our health care system. Providing support, educating each other, sharing and most of all just caring makes all the difference in the world.

The “*Sharing is Caring*” Initiative is already here and has just begun... -Dr. Maria Patriquin Ivanov MD



Welcome Angie Nickerson,
Administrative Assistant to Dr. Patriquin
Angie comes with many years experience as an
administrative assistant. Most importantly, she is
kind, hard working and principled.

Welcome Angie!

Love begins with the letter “C”

I send my Christmas cards after Christmas and write about love after Valentines Day. Let's celebrate “love month”. Much has been written this month bestowing the health, emotional and longevity benefits of loving relationships but little is spoken of the forbidden “L” word that is woven through our work as health care providers. We would never attribute such meaning, devotion, energy and purpose to anything other than what we **Love**.

Limited time, budgets, shrinking resources, an aging population, stressed kids, epidemic levels of depression and anxiety coupled with increasing expectations in a “not well” health care system has led to more work, “**Burnout**” and “**compassion fatigue**”.

Our professional roles have evolved along with technology (e.g. easier access to current information and more effective and efficient treatments). There is a push for it to fill in the health care gaps, but it comes a cost of losing opportunity and eventually ability to connect on a human level. We stand to lose our role as “**healers**”, the very thing that creates our meaning, satisfaction and contentment with work.

Healing necessitates a **human connection** and nothing can replace what happens when we are fully present. Space, time, words, gestures and touch permit expression and sharing of pain, suffering and similarly joy, love, hope and triumphs. **Compassion** is an emotional response to suffering that is accompanied by a desire to help. It differs from **empathy**, the emotional experience of another's feelings.

Emerging research suggests we have a “**compassion instinct**”. Human infants and chimps engage and are attentive when helping and when watching others help, suggesting that the body responds not just based on reward. Many YouTube videos capture people not coming to the aid of others in need, but Harvard professors have shown helping is a primary impulse for both children and adults, that empathy and compassion are natural. They are our “**pro-social drives**” to connect to other human beings which we need to survive.

Compassion creates positive emotional and physical experiences. Brain imaging studies show pleasure centers in the brain being activated when we see someone give and when we receive. In fact, it appears that we experience **more pleasure** and happiness from **giving than receiving** and this has been shown in children as young as two years of age.

Strong social connections help us live longer, increase mood, decrease anxiety, depression and make people more trusting and cooperative which causes a **reciprocal effect** making it a positive **feedback loop**. **Kindness and compassion are contagious!**

Feeling connected by a **meaningful life** full of altruism, empathy and compassion leads to **better physical and mental health**, aids in healing, enhances immune function and decreases inflammation in the body (a process we know underlies the development of disease).

We need to show empathy and demonstrate compassion in our care of patients, it's not us/them as we are taught, but **we**. Legitimately we need to maintain certain boundaries, by being mindful of our own emotional experiences. Often we are taught to suppress our own emotions in an effort to cope. Ironically in asking this of ourselves we inhibit the instinct that allows us to elicit an empathic response. Compassionate care improves patient satisfaction, adherence, decreases anxiety and stress feelings and enables patients. Some studies have shown better diabetic control and lower cholesterol levels when patients were cared for by a family doctor they felt to be empathic. The postulated mechanism is that empathy and compassion increase **trust** and this itself **promotes** **benefits in reporting, better alignment in treatment plans (patient agreement), follow-up and then**

What can we do as health care providers? Remember all you need is love and compassion:

Have **self-compassion**. Take Care. Eat well, sleep, exercise, socialize, take time off and emote. Without space for our emotions in the care of others we cannot authentically hold any suffering and joy with compassion. I like to think of compassion as the “**antidote to burnout**”.

Through compassionate exchange of stories we create the circumstances to help heal others and ourselves. It is an emotional, cathartic, inspiring and validating experience we can have with each other. **Mindfulness and loving kindness meditation** is another means to self-care and emote. Loving kindness meditation increases mood, decreases stress, depression and self-criticism. It increases empathy, compassion and makes us more helpful.

Listen and Tell stories. Our encounters often start with the recounting of a story. The narrative offers a personal account of experiences (symptoms, feelings, thoughts) and holds the possibility of being understood. Our input changes the story and it becomes a shifting, changing and co-created narrative. Be sensitive, choose kind, non-judgmental words, gentle gestures and give the time and safe space for it to unfold. We have great therapeutic potential by being supportive, compassionate and responsive to our patients, their experiences and perspectives. The lovely thing is that in this **co-creation of narrative**, this enabling of emotions and compassion there is mutual influence and benefit. It is “**better together**”. Compassion is a **win-win** experience.

Our stress fosters resentment and blame. That is not healthy space from which to care. Showing compassion to other health care professionals enables us to collaborate in a constructive manner, we need this. “**Compassion is an antidote to crisis**”. **Collaboration** does not merely require a systems review and detailed budget, it too is natural and results when everyone feels they are deserving of compassion and kindness. We are all human, and care is “**better together**”. This collaboration will serve all of us well. It contributes to a culture of wellness within our health care model that we all desire and need.

Compassion can be taught. There are a growing number of programs aimed at teaching and fostering compassion and a “**Triple C**” model is being out forward than encompasses compassion. The best lessons are shared when we practice what we preach.

When all else fails reflect and remember those we admire most and that with compassion they not only lived happy content lives but also contributed significantly to humanity...

Mother Theresa said, “The greatest disease is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved and uncared for”. We can cure many diseases with medicine, but the **only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love.**

Darwin actually spoke to the strength of social and maternal bonds... “communities, which included the greatest number of sympathetic members, would flourish best...” He didn’t state “survival of the fittest”, as we all believe, he said it’s about “**survival of the kindest**”. Some things evolve, some things stay the same. *You can never go wrong with Love. And in our professions, Love begins with the letter “C” for compassion.*

Love, Dr. María Patriquín MD CCFP

A referenced version of this appears on the website for the **Association for Positive Psychiatry in Canada (www.appc.ca)**. Dr. Patriquin is a founding member in the association and enjoys sharing “Love Stories” with her colleague and its founder, Dr. Adriana Wilson.



Good News! Recent studies show massage may heal the heart!

-Recent research has showed that those who attend regular massage therapy will benefit with lowered blood pressure and a drop in markers of inflammation. Many people struggle with high blood pressure, we can now add massage therapy to the list of complimentary approaches in maintaining optimal vascular health.

A few benefits of massage are:

- *Reduce physical and emotional stress
- *Strengthen the immune system
- *Calm the nervous system
- *Heal the heart ♥👉

-Jeannie Mundle, RMT

Visit www.myobalance.ca to learn more about Jeannie's services.

Love is the poetry of the senses.~Honore de Balzac

Collaboration corner: What's new in mental health care? The Association for Positive Psychiatry in Canada is!

The Association for Positive Psychiatry in Canada was founded by **Dr. Adriana Wilson**. Dr. Patriquin is pleased to be a founding member and to contribute to this association that shares many common values. The landscape of health care in Canada is changing and it's imperative that it starts to promote and embrace prevention, wellness, resilience and access in mental health care. The mission: To create a community of professionals and partners committed to the study and dissemination of psychosocial and behavioral interventions founded in science, promoting wellness and mental health. Visit www.appc.ca for more information.



Step 1 – Choose your liquid (water, milk/almond milk/soy milk, juice) and place in blender. If you are only making 1 serving $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup of liquid should be all you need.

Step 2 – Add softer ingredients such as yogurt, kefir (reduce liquid if using kefir), avocado, banana, fresh greens, ground flax, chia seeds or hemp hearts.

Step 3 – Add frozen fruit and vegetables.

Step 4 – Blend. Start slow or pulse if you have the option then increase speed and puree.

Step 5 – Taste. Add honey or another sweetener if needed and blend.



Most of us could use more vegetables and fruit in our diet. Start your day with a smoothie and easily add a few servings of vegetables and fruit to your day. With produce prices soaring head to the frozen section and save. Pick up frozen fruit, spinach, kale and broccoli (yes you can put broccoli in a smoothie!). There are so many delicious combinations to choose from that you won't get bored. Adding greens to your smoothie can be tasty if you balance it with sweeter fruits. For extra fiber and healthy fat add ground flax seed, chia seeds or hemp hearts. If you want more protein without using protein powders use milk and/or greek yogurt. Kefir works well in smoothies and it's a great way to add a source of probiotics. Here are some suggestions to get you started if you aren't a regular smoothie maker. -*Erin McRae, Registered dietitian.*

SIMPLE SMOOTHIE RECIPE

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup Orange Juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen spinach

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plain greek yogurt

$\frac{1}{2}$ banana

1 tbsp. ground flax seed

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup frozen fruit

Add more liquid as needed. If it isn't sweet enough add more juice, a 1 tsp. of honey or vanilla yogurt

RESOLUTION REVOLUTION by Pamela Rubin, Certified Counselor

"Never never never give up!" This is the warrior's cry - but what does it mean in our everyday life? Instead of thinking it means "Fight fight fight to the end!" maybe it means opening, tender-heartedly, to ourselves again and again.....and again.

If as youngsters we learned not to expect love and gentleness, we may have turned that part of ourselves off, to survive. Then later, we may be left wondering if we have lost that part forever. We keep trying and trying, and maybe we only have one second of tenderness available to ourselves, and we might feel so bad about that.

That's exactly where the warrior's bravery comes in. With each moment of softness, of sadness, of gentleness, we can take great encouragement from that. Yes, our quivering heart still is there - ITS ALIVE! And we can let ourselves feel good about that, and keep opening to moments here, moments there. That's how to start never giving up.

One role that mindfulness meditation plays is giving us that time to practice being gentle and loving with ourselves. For a while we stop our project of managing life, and without fixing or changing, be with ourselves as is. Simply sitting, walking, breathing we can catch a glimpse of our simple tender heart - this may even feel shocking if its been a while. So again and again we stay quietly with ourselves and get familiar with being present, of simply gently showing up.

In this open space, our harsh inner critic might start talking, making fun of our tenderness, telling us to move it and get on with the struggle, or telling us we are a bad meditator and/or person! Can we spare a flicker of patience for this part of ourselves too? Can we invite the inner critic to have a cookie, and sit down next to us? Even if the critic is grumbly, usually they will do so. Sitting alongside these difficult, confused parts of ourselves, we can increase our self-compassion and share a smile at our habits of mind. Slowly slowly we may find their bullying lessens, and we become friends to these parts of ourself. Never give up!

Is our pride punctured once again when we realize we are far from perfect? Do we spin out, only staring at the "problem"? Can we focus some attention on the neutral or positive parts of ourselves too? On our own awareness of who we really are? Does this feel awkward and scary? Never give up!

Sometimes it is time to cut and walk away from situations too, such as if we are being abused or abusing others. Can we do so holding our sadness, the rugged feeling of disappointment, and gently say good-bye to certain dreams. To be realistic about boundaries, with a tender heart - this too is a way of not giving up! When we don't give up on ourselves, we notice that we are not giving up on others either. Then we do not give up on our community, or our planet. Bit by bit our confidence increases and we grow from "never give up" to "we can do it!" We can help ourselves and this planet, by trying softer yet stronger, every time.

Winterize Bones – Never Too Late!

I know, I know, who wants to be thinking about winter right now...isn't spring right around the corner? Maybe, but it looks like winter out there to me, with absolutely no signs of spring to behold.

Winter - the longest lasting season in Canada.

Bones - the longest-lasting human body part.

Here follows Part II of my two-part discussion on joints and bone health. I hope you enjoy.

Just like the way in which we weather winter, a large part of how we live our lives and how we age is dependent upon our attitude toward it. Indeed, we influence the health of our bones with every breath. Our future and our past are written into our bones. Even the posture that you have taken to read this article will influence the very structure of your bones.

Whereas the skeletons of great apes, also relatively upright, get regularly stretched out as they hang from branches, we bipedal humans stand firmly on solid ground, often under the burdensome weight of gravity. However, any look at an astronaut when they return from an extended period of time in outer space reveals just how necessary gravity is for our well-being. So the question begs to be asked: *is gravity or advancing age to blame for the imminent feeling of physical heaviness and discontent?*

Neither. It is often poor posture that sets up the situation whereby our joints and spinal column are compromised by gravity. Physical inactivity, poorly coordinated and tense movement, and misaligned posture all negatively affect your bones. Never-allowed-to-rest muscles are required to contract continuously, simply to keep you from not falling over. *This* is what produces pain, decreased blood circulation, and excess pressure in muscles, ligaments, and intervertebral discs. *This* is why the base of your neck and upper back hurt after sitting at a computer for any length of time - your body is working over-time to keep that heavy head looking straight at the screen.

With good posture gravity is not a problem, for it truly requires little effort to remain upright. Our balanced bones, as discussed in part I on joints, never touch each other. Remember how I wrote that *our bones float in a fluid matrix*? Well, it's true - we are a balancing tower of bones, always moving away from and returning to the perpendicular. Indeed, Judith Aston, a prominent American body worker said correctly, "Balance is the successful negotiation of asymmetry."



Try this exercise at home:

Balance exercises are an excellent way to stimulate your bones and improve posture. Corrective movements to hold balance require all the muscles in your body.

Gravity influences every angle of the body that strays from the perpendicular – the ideal exercise for bones. Simply walk daily on rolled up bath towels to challenge yourself, or in the sand for those of you who find yourself at a beach.

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Continued

The goal of any type of postural retraining is to improve efficient and healthy movement. This is why I repeatedly remind my patients that attempting to “fix” their posture through muscular effort will never work. Contracted muscles are not free to power movement. Consciously holding your body where you think it should be will stop as soon as you think of something else. Instead, increasing your awareness of healthy function will more effectively improve posture. Sorry, Mom, but your command to stand up straight will never encapsulate the subtlety of the human body!

*- Robin Stamm M.P.T.,
physiotherapist*



Collaboration Corner:

Living Well offers newsletter space as a way to highlight, encourage and support those that believe in a similar mission. We will highlight organizations, initiatives and people who are contributing to a positive healthy vision of health care and slowly but surely are helping change our attitudes and culture around health and well-being.

Research shows that there are five actions you can take to optimize your health and happiness as you age.

VISIT : fountainofhealth.ca to learn more about aging well. FOH is the 1st educational initiative of its kind and it was started in Halifax in our geriatric psychiatry department by Dr. Keri-Leigh Cassidy!



Mission Statement:

We strive to support individuals and their families in their efforts to live well by providing diversified coordinated care, guidance and education that encompass body, mind and spirit. We promote compassion, collaboration and communication because care is "better together." -Dr. María J. Patriquín Ivanov, MD CCFP,

founder

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www.livingweillihc.ca

Living Well currently has office space for rent and we are interested in you! If you are a health care provider with a similar vision, LIVING WELL might be just the place to call your WORK HOME! Email livingwelladmin@eastlink.ca