



# Wellness ... Get on the Bus!



"People who engage in kind acts become happier over time," says Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside. "When you are kind to others, you feel good as a person — more moral, optimistic, and positive," she says. Lyubomirsky has studied happiness for over 20 years. Her research, presented at the recent annual meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology in New Orleans, found that performing other positive acts once a week led to the most happiness.

According to Dr. David R. Hamilton, acts of kindness create an emotional warmth, which releases a hormone known as oxytocin. Oxytocin causes the release of a chemical called nitric oxide, which dilates the blood vessels. This reduces blood pressure and, therefore, oxytocin is known as a "cardioprotective" hormone. It protects the heart by lowering blood pressure.

Researcher Stephen Post of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine serves as president of the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, which conducts and funds research on altruism, compassion and service. His research shows that when we give of ourselves, especially if we start young, everything from life satisfaction to self-realization and physical health is significantly improved. Mortality is delayed, depression is reduced and well-being and good fortune are increased.

Monica Advani, the director and owner of the Global Montessori Preschool in Westwood, teaches kindness to her children beginning at a very young age. Whenever she notices one child doing a random act of kindness to another, she writes it in the kindness book. During line time, she will read it and thank those children involved with the positive action. She says, "this motivates and inspires other children to do the same."

The moral of the story is to be kind and do kind acts for others. You can benefit your heart, reduce anxiety, lower blood pressure, and simply be a happier human being. Who wouldn't want that? *In other words—Love Your Passengers.* For some ideas on RACK (Random Acts of Christmas Kindness, see page 3 of this newsletter).

## 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS WORKOUT

"On the first day of Christmas,  
my trainer gave to me..."

- 1 plank for 20 seconds
- 2 burpees
- 3 push-ups
- 4 star jumps
- 5 squats
- 6 chair dips
- 7 boxing punches
- 8 mountain climbers
- 9 jumping jacks
- 10 alternating lunges
- 11 crunches
- 12 high knees

Just like the song!  
Perform it in a ladder -  
1 plank, then 2 burpees  
and 1 plank, then 3  
push-ups, 2 burpees,  
and 1 plank, and so  
on...

### Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Apple and Cranberries Recipe

Called "choux de Bruxelles" in Belgium, where they were first cultivated 500 years ago, Brussels sprouts — "mini cabbages" — are easy to cook and seriously good for you. Similar to other cruciferous vegetables, Brussels sprouts are good sources of phytonutrients, delivering their potential antioxidant benefits. And, like cabbage, they also provide vitamin C, folate and fiber. Their flavor? Small, tender Brussels sprouts are usually sweeter and milder than larger sprouts — especially when cooked only until tender-crisp, not overcooked. Belgians traditionally season Brussels sprouts with nutmeg — but fruit, herbs and nuts also complement the flavor and balance the vegetable's characteristic bitterness.

#### Ingredients

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and quartered
- 1 medium sweet (e.g. Gala, Fuji) apple, cored and diced
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup apple or orange juice
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon
- ¼ teaspoon salt, or to taste
- ½ teaspoon freshly-ground black pepper
- ¼ cup chopped toasted pecans\*

#### Directions

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Combine Brussels sprouts, apple and cranberries in a large bowl. Set aside.
- Blend apple or orange juice, oil, tarragon, salt and pepper in a small bowl; add to Brussels sprouts mixture; toss until well coated.
- Arrange the Brussels sprouts mixture in a 9-by-9-inch baking dish. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until the Brussels sprouts are fork tender.

To serve, top with toasted pecans. \*Toast the pecans in a small, heavy dry skillet over medium heat, shaking the skillet frequently for 1 to 2 minutes until golden to release the flavorful oils.

#### Nutrition Information

Serving size: ¾ cup

Serves 4

Calories: 200; Calories from fat: 70; Total fat: 8g; Saturated fat: 0.5g; Trans fat: 0g; Cholesterol: 0mg; Sodium: 180mg; Total carbohydrate: 33g; Dietary fiber: 7g; Sugars: 21g; Protein: 5g

## Set Goals, Not Resolutions

There are many benefits to setting goals. Goals direct your focus and attention. They help you remain persistent in the face of adversity. They increase your self-confidence and help you develop problem-solving strategies. They help you train smarter and harder. The bottom line is that when you set effective goals, they help you perform up to your potential.

Research conducted within sport psychology suggests that the world's best athletes have clear, simple and targeted daily goals. They know what they want to accomplish each day and each workout. They know how their daily goals connect to their long-term goals, plans and dreams.

The start of the New Year is a good time to think about what you want to accomplish in the coming months. Perhaps you have already committed to a New Year's resolution, which is a good start.

However, resolutions tend to be all or nothing. Black or white. We usually focus on what we don't want to do rather than what we do want. And we don't usually plan out how to sustain that resolution for a whole year. Perhaps that's why only 8 percent of people who make a New Year's resolution actually keep it.

Instead of resolutions, set goals. Dedicate the time and effort toward setting and evaluating your goals and think of what you could accomplish.

Here are some tips to help you be all you can be:

### 1. Set specific, but challenging goals.

If your goals are detailed and measurable, they are more likely to improve your performance than vague or "do-your-best" goals. Also, to keep your motivation high, goals should be set that are just beyond your reach, but not far beyond your reach.

### 2. Set multiple goals.

An ideal number is three. More gives you too much to focus on, but only one can put too much pressure on you. A runner who only focuses on qualifying for the Boston Marathon, for example, may feel too much pressure before and during the competition.

### 3. Ink it, don't just think it.

People are more successful if they write down their goals. A study of Harvard alumni suggests that the three percent of alumni who wrote down their goals at graduation made more money combined 30 years later than the 97 percent who did not.

### 4. Frame your goals positively instead of negatively.

Rather than saying what you don't want to do, write what you do want. Changing "I will avoid eating sweets this year" to "I will eat one small piece of chocolate once a week" has a dramatic impact on your focus and motivation. It allows you to think about the chocolate you can enjoy, not chocolate you can't have.

### 5. Plan out what you are going to do weekly or daily.

This is incredibly important and a step that most people miss. We tend to think about our goals, but don't write a plan that includes short-term daily or weekly goals. Someone who is trying to lose a certain amount of weight this year should break that total into smaller monthly goals.

### 6. Include a plan to adjust your goals.

Many of us think that when you set a goal you can't change it. But life sometimes gets in the way. You may get injured during training, and may have to readjust your goals.

### 7. Ask someone to sign your plan.

This person can help hold you accountable for your goals and support you in the process. Think carefully about who you choose. It should be someone who can be honest with you when the going gets tough.

Spend some time reflecting on what you want to accomplish today. Use this opportunity to reflect on what you accomplished last year and look toward the next. Then set goals instead of making resolutions. This increases your chance for success and keep you motivated and focused for the year to come.

**THE BEST YEAR**

OUT WITH THE OLD {20\_\_}      IN WITH THE NEW {20\_\_}

**2** FAVORITE MEMORIES

**3** THINGS I'M GRATEFUL FOR

**1** HARD LESSON I LEARNED!

**1** THING I DID THIS YEAR I'M PROUD OF

**3** PLACES I WANT TO GO

**2** WAYS I CAN HELP OTHERS

**1** THING I WANT TO GET BETTER AT

**2** THINGS I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO

**3** NEW THINGS I WANT TO TRY

# Random of Acts of Kindness for Christmas

Include a note (when appropriate) like the one pictured below to help spread the word about RACK.

1. Go through your toys and donate ones you don't play with to charity or local children's hospital
2. Donate food to your food bank
3. Donate pet supplies to the shelter and go pet some of the animals.
4. Help a someone do a chore or other job.
5. Donate books you no longer read or need.
6. Put money in the Salvation Army bucket.
7. Bring breakfast to your school teacher.
8. Leave a little treat in the mailbox for the mail carrier.
9. Take a treat to the local fire station.
10. Fulfill an angel tree request.
11. Go to a nursing home and visit – take around candy canes and wish them a Merry Christmas.
12. Write grandparents a letter / draw a picture and mail it to them.
13. Leave an extra large tip for a server/waiter along with a note wishing them a Merry Christmas.
14. Leave one dollar bills around a dollar store (especially in the toy section!).
15. Pay for the person behind you in a fast food drive-through.
16. Make a treat and a Christmas card for the school bus driver or crossing guard.
17. Donate coloring books to a hospital waiting room.
18. Offer to take the neighbors dog for a walk.
19. Hold the door open for people behind you
20. Smile at every single person you see for one whole day (makes a great family challenge!).
21. Write a thank you note for a teacher or coach or someone who has influenced you and mail it to them.
22. Take a treat or note to a neighbor or friend who could use a pick-me-up.
23. Write thank you notes or put together care packages for those who are serving our country in the military.
24. Have a bake sale or fundraiser and donate all the earnings to a local charity.
25. Go buy inexpensive socks, hats, or mittens and deliver them to a homeless shelter or keep them in your purse and hand them out if you come across any homeless people.
26. Leave some extra money in the vending machine (or even tape it to the outside with a note that says "This treat's on me!").
27. Buy a little treat or give a thank you note for the cashier at the grocery store.
28. Tape some money to the gas pump for the next person who gets gas.
29. Babysit for a single parent so they can have some alone time or even get some Christmas shopping done.
30. Clean out your garage or storage area and give stuff away for free on Craigslist.
31. Donate blood.
32. Invite someone who lives alone over for dinner.
33. For one day, try to pick up at least three pieces of trash wherever you are.
34. Send unexpected flowers to someone you appreciate.
35. Run errands for elderly/widows in your area.
36. Take a treat and/or thank you note to the janitors at your school.
37. Double the dinner you are preparing and deliver it to someone who could use it.
38. Put together a full Christmas dinner (turkey, potatoes, gravy, rolls, etc) and drop it off at someone's house who could use it.
39. Sit with someone at lunch that looks lonely or that doesn't have very many friends.
40. Compliment at least 5 people in one day.
41. Smile at 5 complete strangers in one day.
42. Help someone in your area wrap Christmas gifts.
43. Take a treat and/or thank you card to a librarian.
44. Do an extra household chore without being asked.
45. Make a homemade bird feeder and hang it outside (like a pinecone rolled in peanut butter and birdseed).
46. Donate diapers and wipes to a local women's/family shelter.
47. Buy some new coloring books and crayons and leave in a hospital waiting room.
48. Decorate some pillowcases and take them to a local children's hospital.
49. Collect jackets, blankets, and shoes and take them to a homeless shelter.
50. Tape bags of microwave popcorn to the Redbox rental machine.

