

Wellness Tip **ACE Activities for Promoting Balanced Living**

It is common to go through periods of life when we feel a sense of imbalance in our day-to-day life. There are also times when we may lose our motivation all together and struggle to put one foot in front of the other.

No matter where you find yourself, a handy acronym for balanced living is ACE, which stands for activities of *Achievement*, activities of *Connection*, and activities of *Enjoyment*.

Are you someone who tends to over-emphasize the “to do” list and heavily weight your day to achieving tasks? Are you someone who tends to put play before work only to find yourself scrambling to catch up on the tasks of adulthood? Do you find yourself going through life doing okay generally, but feel disconnected from yourself or others? Or maybe you are someone who finds yourself swinging from one extreme to the other – for example, over-achieving one week only to burn out and spend most of your time playing the next just to recover. Imbalance tends not to feel good – a sense of discontentment or dissatisfaction can emerge.

If you’re unsure of your typical pattern, one way to gain awareness is to keep a log. Jot down how you spend your time, which can help you notice how often you’re achieving vs enjoying vs connecting. If you notice you are doing a lot of achievement activities but not a lot of things you find fun, it may mean you want to change it up a little bit. The same goes if you are doing a lot of things that give you pleasure, but not things that keep your home clean or prepared for school tasks. The key is balance.

If you find yourself out of balance, you are encouraged to attempt at least one activity of achievement, one activity of connection, and one activity of enjoyment every day. Each type of activity is a worthy endeavor because they all enhance our well-being. Step away from judgments that deem one type of activity more “worthy” or “useful” than another. Track your activities and rate their impact on your sense of well-being. What emotions come up for you when you engage in these types of activities... Confidence? Satisfaction? Anxiety? Surprise? Joy? Contentment? Mastery? Notice if there is any activity you do that hits more than one ACE category. Notice the impact of putting effort toward greater balance.

Obviously, there is much subjectivity when we discuss ACE activities. What gives you a sense of enjoyment may be different from someone else, for example. What is important to keep in mind is how ACE activities affect you and reminding yourself that all types are essential for overall well-being.

If you’d like to talk with someone about establishing greater balance in your life, or for any other questions / concerns, feel free to contact the MSCC to talk with a counselor or schedule an appointment:

Medical Student Counseling Center osac-mscc@uiowa.edu 319-335-8056 1240 MERF

Check out the MSCC Website for past Wellness Tips:

<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/md/student-support/student-counseling/mscc-wellness-programs-and-resources>

Remember, life is really hard at times - be gentle with yourself!

Rebecca Stinson, PhD, ABPP

Senior Behavioral Health Clinician

Medical Student Counseling Center

Roy J. and Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine

University of Iowa

Pronouns: she/her