

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

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“Three B’s of Healthy Living”

It’s often easier said than done, but a person’s healthy living and improvement of quality of life can be summed up in three small phrases. The 3 B’s you could say. Build a better meal, boost your physical activity, and balance stress. Doing all three can be difficult but doing all three also is important and they all affect our health. They provide a valuable road map for people heading into holidays or considering a New Year’s resolution.

Build a better meal

The USDA provides a visual reminder to help Americans make healthy choices from each of the five food groups. The graphic is called MyPlate and can be viewed online by visiting www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy. This graphic gives us a great image of how all our meals – breakfast, lunch, and dinner – should be built. Half your plate should be fruits or vegetables, a quarter should be grains – focusing on whole grains – and a quarter should be protein. Then, maybe a side of dairy, if you enjoy consuming dairy. Fruits and vegetables contain fiber, which may help to manage weight, prevent constipation, enhance gut health and reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, among other benefits.

The best part about food and nutrition is that you can get creative with it. Some people like to eat the same meals, but diversifying our plate is also healthy. ‘Eat the rainbow’, because each color has different nutrients, antioxidants, phytonutrients, vitamins and minerals.

Boost your physical activity

When people think about physical activity, often they think about going to the gym or going out and running a mile or a marathon or whatever it might be. Instead, physical activity may mean a steady 15-20-minute walk, or another activity that reduces sitting time and gets you away from screens or other technology. Being more physically active has some immediate benefits. For example, you may feel like your stress is reduced after a short walk. It reduces your blood pressure at least temporarily.

Long-term benefits include a decreased risk of heart disease or diabetes, lower blood pressure, stronger bones and muscles, and better coordination and balance. Some studies have shown that no matter how healthy you are in terms of eating, if you sit for a majority of your day, and then go home and just sit on the couch, that can actually negate some of the other health benefits that you’re trying to get by maybe eating an apple in the morning for breakfast.

Balance Stress

Physical activity also helps to reduce stress, but colder weather can limit the opportunity to get outside and move. It's important to have a game plan going in to the holidays. If you know that finances or family dynamics are going to be points of stress, make sure you think about it and prepare a plan so that you know that if you're in certain situations, you will know how to handle them. Your plan of action should help to assure that stress doesn't get the best of you.

Chronic stress can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke or high blood pressure. Keeping stress is not a good thing. People handle stress differently, which I think is important to acknowledge that you and I are going to react differently to stressful situations. But to really make sure that you know what your triggers are and that you know how to resolve those is very important.

You don't have to tackle all three B's at once. Maybe start with building a better meal first and develop a goal for that. Then, once you feel like you're at a good place there, you can move on to setting a goal for boosting your physical activity or balancing your stress, or whatever order works for you.

Information comes from Johnson County KSRE Nutrition food safety and health agent, Chelsea Reinberg.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.