

Old School Wellness made Multidimensional

WHAT'S IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Relationships: Internal & External. How imbalances can lead to loneliness.
- Thoughts on Community: And the essential human need to be seen, heard, and understood

In this month's issue we will be covering the topics of relationships and community and why they are contributors to our health. This will include the internal and external components towards relationships and how imbalances can lead to loneliness. We will also be talking about the importance of community and why it supports our wellbeing. Are relationships with others and yourself a priority in your life? Do some relationships have a higher priority than others, if so, what ones? Are you a part of a supportive community, that nourishes you for growth? These are some things to think about while reading this month's issue.

THE WELLNESS MULTIDIMENSIONAL MODEL

What does health mean to you?
 What daily habits do you follow to maintain or better your own wellbeing? What goals are you setting to try and better your health?
 What lights you up inside?

Health and wellness has become such a popular topic these days and some aspects of health are more well known than others. With the wellness multidimensional model, it shows all aspects of health not just one. There are many aspects that all intertwine and contribute to your overall health. Do you know what some of them are?

Let's dive into some of these topics and see where some areas need a little bit more focus in your life!

1. Feb - Mindset & Selfcare
2. Mar - Relationships & Community
3. Apr - Air, Water, & Sun
4. May - Food & Consumption
5. June - Rest
6. July - Body & Movement
7. Aug - Spirituality
8. Sept - Purpose & Career
9. Oct - Finances
10. Nov - Gratitude
11. Dec Fun & Celebration

WHAT OTHER ASPECTS OF HEALTH ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU?



Relationships: External & Internal. How imbalances can lead to loneliness

Have you ever heard the term “quality over quantity”? Think about it for a minute and see what you immediately think of. Do relationships pop into your mind at all when you hear this? Our well-being is hugely dependent on the nature and **QUALITY** of the relationships in our lives, with others and yourself. When I say relationships, I don’t only mean romantic partners. This means all the relationships in your life, including partners, spouses, parents, siblings, coworkers, neighbors, and so many others.

The element of relationships includes your connections and interactions with others around you. On the outer layer, it’s about the actual people in our lives and our exchanges with them. We naturally seek out relationships in our lives because they are a crucial part of our overall well-being. Humans are social creatures and need others in order to feel stable and happy. Connection, touch, and communication are all parts of a relationship that contribute to our health and wellness.



Moving from the external layer to the internal layer, we focus on the relationship that we have with ourselves. This is the most important one of all, as it is the one you’ll have the longest in your lifetime. It’s important to pay close attention to the relationship you have with yourself and have periodic check-ins.



Spend some time thinking about how you feel about yourself. Do you feel a lot of self-love? Take a good look at your sense of self and your levels of self-esteem. Are they as healthy as they could be? We often put conditions on ourselves that we will only be happy or at least approve of ourselves when we meet certain goals (i.e. lose weight, get a better job, etc). However, this way of thinking can be stressful not only mentally but also physically. It is important to set goals and have ambitions but it is also important for us to be kind to ourselves and take time for reflection and healing.

Self-love is a type of unconditional love that is present no matter what happens in your life. It's about having compassion and gentleness for ourselves. I would say it's the most important ingredient when it comes to our success. It's nearly impossible to achieve our dreams and build healthy relationships with others if we haven't built ourselves off of a foundation of self love and care.

Thinking about the external and internal elements of our relationships in life, let's go back to the term *humans are social creatures*. As mentioned above, relationships (external and internal) are important to our well-being, but why exactly? What can happen if we don't form relationships, tend to them, and become detached from those around us and ourselves? Loneliness.



What did you feel just then? What reactions does your body have when you picture being alone? Everyone has a different picture of loneliness. Some may picture being physically by themselves in a room or place. I personally envision myself being in a large room full of people, yet feeling as though no one sees me, as though I am invisible to the world around me.

Loneliness can have a detrimental effect on our health long term. Not only do our bodies have a physical reaction to feeling alone, but mentally it can also be taxing when we feel alone.

A term that pops into my head when I think of the relationship with ourselves is what the flight attendant tells you in the safety briefing on the plane before take off; "put the mask on yourself prior to putting the mask on someone else". They say this because how can you help someone else in a state of emergency when you are on the verge of passing out yourself due to lack of oxygen? Another good one I often tell myself: "you can't pour from an empty cup".

Oftentimes, we think of relationships and we automatically think of others. When in reality, we should be thinking of ourselves first. Relationships can be nurturing and help us grow, but they can also present us with serious challenges and cause significant stress in our lives. For both relationships with ourselves and others. How can we expect ourselves to have healthy relationships with others when we don't even have a healthy relationship within our own being?

In such a busy world, it is easy to put ourselves on the back burner. Another term that I heard recently that is starting to make more and more sense to me is “self care is not selfish”. Society today can sometimes make us feel bad for taking time for ourselves over spending time with others. Who wants to be “the bad guy” for telling someone you love “NO”? We all need time for ourselves to tend to our inner garden and our own needs, as well as connection and interaction with others. Like many things in life, moderation is key!

This is why regular check-ins with ourselves are important so we can start to recognize when the time we put towards external relationships is getting out of balance with the effort towards our internal relationship (and vice versas). While it is important to give back to your community, it is also important to give back to yourself and refill your own “cup” after you have poured from it.



iWeigh Podcast Episode - Shedding light on loneliness

I've been listening to a podcast called iWeigh with Jameela Jamil since it began in the spring of 2020. Jameela Jamil's outspoken activism (and willingness to learn publicly) first attracted my attention via Instagram, which led me to the iWeigh page and community there. When they announced a podcast was coming, I was interested to listen. The release of the initial podcast episodes happened to coincide with COVID lockdowns, which worked out well for me.

In April 2020, I started going on long daily walks while listening to podcasts to escape my empty apartment. It's difficult to put into words the comfort and relief I felt just to see other human beings from a distance. Those early pandemic weeks and months were so uncertain, isolating and terrifying. To give and receive a distanced wave with a stranger in their yard was indescribably warming, in a way I wasn't able to experience on phone and video calls with family and friends.

I say all that to give you an idea of the state I was in when the **iWeigh podcast episode with Surgeon General Vivek Murthy** came into my earbuds. The episode was centered around the topic of loneliness, and it hit me square in the chest. I trudged along, crying, for most of it. The episode had a huge impact on me, not just because of my visceral reaction, but because of the message. I think it would have resonated with me prior to the pandemic, but the pandemic just threw everything into stark focus.

The podcast wasn't about pandemic-related loneliness, they were discussing points from Murthy's book, which had been written long before the pandemic. (I should also mention some content warnings: Jamil uses colorful language, and there are mentions of suicide.) The discussion between Murthy and Jamil is frank and honest. Murthy explains that his role traveling around the country as Surgeon General led to many conversations with a variety of people about their health, but he noticed a common thread underneath the physical ailments: many people were experiencing loneliness.

According to Murthy, "Loneliness is this subjective feeling that we do not have enough social connection in our life. And this is different from isolation, which is an objective term. It's an objective measure, in fact, of how many people I have around me. The reason these are distinct is because what matters is how you feel...what matters in whether we're lonely or not is the quality and strength of our connections."

Over the course of their conversation, Murthy describes the evolutionary and biological reactions to loneliness - stress, elevated threat response and an erosion in self-confidence - and why the body would react in these ways. "Our body has evolved to feel good in one set of circumstances, but our culture is pushing us toward a different set of circumstances, and that creates conflict," Murthy states.

Murthy mentions how our modern day priorities are out of alignment. Many people would list a person or group of people in a list of their top three priorities in life, but those same priorities are not always reflected in the reality of our everyday actions.

Towards the 44 minute mark, Murthy and Jamil offer concrete suggestions to relieve loneliness: how social media can be used for good, tips for how to increase the quality of our social connections, how acts of service can bring value to our lives and how activism can create community. I highly recommend listening to the whole episode to gain this insight.

As Jamil jokes towards the end of the episode, there's an irony in discussing loneliness during a time of actual isolation and lockdowns, where you can't physically gather. And I definitely recognized that too, but what this podcast episode gave me in the moment was a feeling that I wasn't alone in feeling alone. It also got me thinking about what I could do to connect more within the confines of a lockdown.

In addition to the comfort of seeing other people, my walks were giving me something else. I was witnessing the early signs of spring in a way that I never had before. My daily observations of the specific changes happening around my neighborhood felt miraculous. To catch little glimpses of green poking out of the brown, and then watching those plants grow and grow was really delightful. I'd never felt so invested in my environmental surroundings.

After this podcast episode, I started taking more pictures to document and share the progress with my friends. My orchid at home was starting to bloom, so I created a countdown on my Instagram of buds vs. blooms. I was surprised by how many friends responded to those pictures. They wanted daily updates! They encouraged me to keep sharing. It became a source of social connection, and one I'm still talking about with my friends now that we can see each other in person again, which I never would have predicted.

THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMUNITY - And the essential human need to be seen, heard, and understood.

Conversations about community have been popping up a lot more recently, either that or the discussion has always been there, and I did not notice it. I believe during the pandemic, while working virtually people have struggled to fulfill their need for daily interaction with their peers. Our common routines of being around each other for eight hours a day were thrown off where we had to work solo all day and interactions with peers were limited to phone and web-based meetings. This was a tough adjustment.



While everyone managed through it, it does not necessarily mean that our need for human interaction and collaboration was fulfilled.

When it comes to human interaction people have varying needs, the extremely extraverted of us love to talk and see people all day long. Some other people are happy with one meaningful conversation a day, then there are some people that are happy with one meaningful interaction a week, a month, a year? 😊 It varies between people, beyond that it varies within us based on our current life events and moods also. The balance of together versus alone time is highly individual and situational, one thing that is consistent across the board is that we as humans all have the very basic need to be together and interact with other people in our community.

Once while reading a wellness magazine I came across a phrase "human beings have an innate need to be seen, heard and understood". I cannot recall the person who coined this saying but found it very interesting and true. The article was largely about what it actually means to be healthy and well. Loneliness was identified as one of "unusual suspects" that are very damaging to our health and overall wellbeing. Poor nutrition, various vices, lack of sleep and exercise seem very obvious and frequently talked about offenders, but loneliness is something I came across for the first time.

If we as human beings have a need to be seen, heard and understood, it means we need people around us who can fulfill this need, and we in turn can fulfill this need for others. Being together in the same place physically (and sometimes virtually) is essential to meet this very significant need.

But is it enough to be in the same space physically? I am sure many of you at one point or another felt lonely in a crowd, party, bar, busy street of NYC? Physically being together in the same place with others is a start, but it is not all. Exchange of thoughts, ideas, opinions, compliments, giggles yes giggles 😊 is a huge part of our daily interactions that bring us meaning, purpose and joy.

As people return to their offices, work-life balance is getting a lot of focus. I see this time as a great opportunity to build the exact community you wish to be a part of simply by bringing into focus and identifying what it is that we have missed most during the time of the pandemic and may be even for years before and what should be brought back into our community life and what can be left in the past. It is an opportunity to reinvent, improve and get it right.

In a work community there is a very special opportunity to create, brainstorm and succeed together, in my opinion succeeding at something together is one of the greatest feelings out there as it gives one a sense of belonging, meaning and togetherness.



Community is made up of each one of us, personally bringing and sharing our qualities with each other is what makes the community.

As I think of this my personal definition of community becomes clearer to me:

Since we have a human need to be together, but not just together but also “seen, heard and understood”, that to me becomes a definition of community:

A SAFE PLACE WHERE YOU SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS AND FEEL SEEN, HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD.

What comes to your mind when you think of community? What are the definitions of a supportive work community you would like to foster at RELYCO?

