

BALANCE

WELLNESS MAGAZINE OF THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2017 | VOLUME 3 | NUMBER 1

Getting to Better™:

Quality Leadership and Better Outcomes

Tips for Connecting
to Your Intuition

Who Let the
Dogs In? MTS

Downsizing
and Moving

It's Time to
Put You First



editor's MESSAGE



The Balance team hopes you had a wonderful, relaxing summer, and that you took some time to focus on your personal wellness over the past two months.

With the start of a fresh year we are excited to announce some new programming available through Balance to assist you with your goals over the next ten months. Continuing with our belief that wellness looks different to every individual we are increasing our diversity of offerings through the program. We are thrilled to welcome:

Barry Kay – Award winning Entertainer

Having fun and laughter are extremely important aspects of wellness, and because of this we can't wait to introduce you to Barry Kay. Barry is one of Canada's most dynamic, captivating and interactive entertainers. With over 28 years of experience he has a talent for engaging any group at any event and making it an event that is talked about for days after. Through Balance he will be taking participants on an action filled journey and providing wellness entertainment at PD days unlike any other you have ever been to before.

Sylvia Marusyk and her dynamic presentation "Stressed to Kill"

With mental illness on the rise, everywhere you turn people are ready to blow their top. In "Stressed to Kill" Sylvia takes a deep look at the effects of stress, shares her powerful tools to reduce it (the legal and moral ones only...) as well as personal strategies for becoming the "boss" of your stress. Stress is the next health epidemic and it tends to be contagious; infecting entire teams. Stress leave costs businesses over 50 billion dollars a year. Not to mention the cost in the loss of human potential. Discover better health and a dramatically improved quality of life. And if that's not enticing enough, how about learning the secret to slowing the aging process? Sylvia shares that with her audiences too!

Willow Wolfe: The Mindful Brush

Get in touch with your creative spirit for a sense of wellness. In this workshop, Willow guides you step-by-step as you complete your very own work of art. Gentle guidance and the building of skills ensure that those who have never before touched a brush feel successful in their artistic endeavors.

Mark your calendars for November 18th. You won't want to miss this year's 5th annual Wellness Forum. The line-up of speakers is unlike any event we have had in the past. The forum will be held at the Qualico Centre once again, registration is now available through the Manitoba Teachers' Society website.

We are looking forward to another great year with Balance. We hope to connect with you soon to assist in making your next event memorable and impactful.

Robyn Braha
Wellness Coordinator



The
Manitoba
Teachers'
Society



BALANCE
mind body spirit
THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2017, VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

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Published five times a year (September – June) by The Manitoba Teachers' Society. Articles and views published herein do not necessarily represent the policies nor the views of the Society.

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PUBLICATIONS MAIL AGREEMENT

40063378

Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

Information Management
The Manitoba Teachers' Society
191 Harcourt Street, Winnipeg, MB R3J 3H2
email: mts-im@mbteach.org



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Press
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12

enjoy life more

DAY 12

Meaning

Get in touch with your purpose in life. What excites you? What do you feel passionate about? How can you get more involved in what is important to you? Think about this throughout your day.

- Courtesy of Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Mental Health Promotion Team WRHA



Vocal hygiene:

7

Muscle tension dysphonia (MTD)

in this ISSUE

- 4 Getting to Better™: Quality leadership and better outcomes
- 7 Vocal hygiene: Muscle Tension Dysphonia
- 8 A practical guide for caregivers: Balancing work and care
- 10 Financial literacy: Is buying a home on one income the right decision?
- 11 Clean our bodies with a twist
- 12 Clarity over clutter: Downsizing and moving
- 14 Keith's corner: Tips for connecting to your intuition
- 15 You are important! It's time to put you first
- 16 Who let the dogs in? MTS
- 17 Four benefits of adopting a pet
- 18 Posture issues: The importance of balance
- 19 Bike with your family



Who let the dogs in? MTS



4



11



Getting to Better™: Quality leadership and better outcomes



By Stephen de Groot, Myriad Consulting www.stephendegroot.com

As schools develop young hearts and minds to their greatest potential, they will continue to search for ways to maximize their own capacities to achieve best outcomes for students. This article makes the case that, while there are many approaches for improving student performance and educator capacity, quality leadership in and of itself may operate as one of the greatest mechanisms for accomplishing better outcomes for teachers and students alike.

Personal reflections – greatest leadership

Reflection #1: Take a moment to consider when, at any point in your career, you experienced the greatest leadership from a Principal, Vice-Principal, Administrator, Department Head, mentor or colleague. From your perspective, what made it so great? What were the behaviours and/or qualities that made it a great experience?

Reflection 2: Take a moment to consider what that time was like for you? How would you describe work at that time, in the context of your experience with that identified leader?

Quality leadership and important insights

Over the last 5 years, I have asked the above questions to more than 3000 educators and 5000 helpers in a variety of human service industries. Despite the diversity of people, culture, work environments, there were common themes embedded within the range of rich responses that provide key insights to the value of quality leadership.

Perceptions are everything

A challenge for most leaders is best summed up by Edward L. Flom, “One of the hardest tasks of leadership is understanding that you are not what you

are, but what you are perceived to be by others”. It doesn’t really matter how great we think we are; whether leadership is determined to be of quality and/or effective can only be determined by the perceptions and experiences of staff members.

Inspiration - an experience, not a title

According to most respondents leadership has very little to do with a person’s title and more to do with their behaviors and the experiences that are evoked.

Formal titles, such as Administrator, Principal, Vice-Principal, Department Head are positions that are given. According to most educators and their human service comrades, leadership is something that is earned, not given.

Leaders according to most people can be differentiated from managers by one common experience; INSPIRATION. Leaders inspire; they stimulate, motivate, influence and move staff members to action, to feel better, do better and achieve better as they carry out their work.

Relationship is key

A prominent theme that has emerged; it is the critical role a positive leader-member relationship plays in a staff members’ experience of quality and effective leadership. According to many educators, the relationship with their leader played a major role in their level of motivation, engagement and overall performance at work. Great leader-member relationships are commonly characterized by key ingredients such as respect, empathy, integrity and trust.

Positive, supportive and meaningful

Thousands of stories have surfaced three very common and very significant themes. Educators describe their perceptions of



Enhancing quality leadership – tips for leaders

1. Know yourself (Needs, Values, Goals, Strengths) first
2. Start with your strengths; what are you already doing well
3. Develop a plan for enhancing quality leadership
4. Develop a variety of feedback pathways
5. Take ALL Feedback seriously
6. Practice, practice, practice, makes Better
7. Have Fun

quality and effective leaders as being a positive, supportive and/or meaningful experience. While these three factors are common among a diverse group of educators, their individual experiences hold the key to what positive, supportive and meaningful mean from their individual perspectives. Positive and supportive are often easier for people to define and describe. Meaningful on the other hand requires a little more exploration.

Meaningful, according to many educators, is experienced when their needs, values, goals and/or strengths are being acknowledged, supported and/or accommodated to some degree, by their leader. The following statements reflect various aspects of most meaningful:

- My Principal was a great listener and remembered what was important to me.

- I was safe to take risks in my new job without being criticized, judged or blamed.
- My Vice-Principal was approachable; I could go see her for almost anything.
- I have a great relationship with my principal. Unlike at my last school where I never saw my administrator ever. (Name) stops by regularly to see how I'm doing and asks if I need anything.
- My Department Head asked my opinion, it was always taken seriously.
- My leader just gets it; he understands how hard it can be.
- I had the autonomy I wanted, but if I needed something he was there.
- She was dependable and reliable; I could trust that she would follow through.
- I had an Administrator that always started with what I was doing well and focused on my strengths.

Quality leadership and better outcomes

There is a wealth of research that indicates effective and quality leadership positively impacts job satisfaction, organizational climate and culture, staff commitment, engagement and retention. Conversely, we also know that when staff members experience leadership as being inadequate, negative and/or poor quality the outcomes are less than preferred. There are clear links between less than satisfactory leader experiences and low morale, poor job satisfaction, negative work climate, increased stress, strain, disengagement and burnout.

We know that, when educators do well, their students do well also. In addition to this, we know that quality leadership may be the primary source mediator for staff satisfaction, commitment, engagement and overall performance. Therefore, quality leadership exists as a major key for enhancing preferred outcomes for educators and students alike.

5 ways leaders can inspire

Simply put, when educators experience quality leadership, they are inspired to feel better and do better as they carry out their important work.

Make the leader-member relationship a priority: According to thousands of educators and research (Leader-Member Exchange Theory) a quality leadership

experience is dependent upon a relationship characterised by a high degree of trust, liking and respect. Quality relationships are also dependent on relations-oriented skills such as effective paraphrasing, empathic listening and variety of open ended questions. When trust, respect and liking are high, it is much more likely that staff members will be open and honest about their experience and share what is most important to them.

Leaders that make relationship a priority can check-in with their members by asking, "How do you think we are doing?" or "How would we say our relationship is going?"

Get to know what motivates staff members: Great relationships are conducive to better communication, which is necessary to learn about staff members. Finding out what motivates members is helpful so that leaders may work towards "greatest-fit" for staff within the work and the work environment. In addition to this, knowing what motivates members can provide insight into what and how leaders can enhance an increase in positive and supportive interactions/experiences.

Several questions that are helpful to uncover and connect with key motivators are:

- What brought you to education?
- What keeps you here?
- What aspects of your work are you most excited about?
- When work gets tough, what are the things that keep you hanging in?

Get to know unique needs, values, goals and strengths: Although all educators share similar values and a shared mission, their individual stories can be very diverse. When people describe their member-leader experience as being the most positive, supportive and meaningful, it is often because to some degree their unique needs, values, goals and strengths are being acknowledged, aligned and/or realized. The following questions can be helpful for the leader to surface important needs, values, goals and strengths:

- When you consider your work, what do you feel you need to be and do your best?
- What values/principles of the school/division values are most important to you?

- What are you hoping to accomplish with your students?
- What do you feel are your personal/professional strengths?

Operationalize important values in practice: Research and thousands of educators confirm the importance of values, in operation, play in contributing to a quality leadership experience. When leaders consistently behave in ways that operationalize key values such as trust, respect, empathy and integrity, they will enhance the leader-member relationship and directly contribute to a quality leadership experience. Role modelling important and guiding values by leaders is critical for two important reasons. Leadership integrity is based on whether leaders really do what they say is important and, higher levels of leader-member trust is the result of great values in practice.

Focus on staff member strengths: Everybody likes to hear about what they are doing well. When leaders focus on strengths point to concrete successes and real potentialities for development, growth, and productivity they create a positive, supportive and meaningful leadership experience. When leaders take a strengths approach to support and performance development, staff members experience hope, optimism, and sense of real competency, ingredients that are essential for inspiration, positive and effective staff performance, and achievement of preferred educator and student outcomes. Several simple and practical approaches for initiating a strengths approach within leadership are:

- Ask staff members about their strengths
- Consistently catch them doing great things
- Document a growing list of identified strengths
- Provide opportunities for staff to demonstrate and build on strengths **B**

Vocal hygiene: Muscle tension dysphonia (MTD)



By **Caitlin Buchel, RSLP, SLP (C), M.Cl.Sc. , Buchel Speech & Language Group**

You look at your empty classroom and feel a sense of relief – it's Friday afternoon and you survived the week! You started the week with a good voice, but by midweek you started to sound like you still had that cold that you got rid of almost a month ago. Between your boisterous students, the track meet that you are running, and a planned evening out with friends, you aren't sure how your voice will last the weekend – or the week to come!

If you read the last issue of *Balance*, you know that muscle tension can have a significant effect on your voice. With Muscle Tension Dysphonia (MTD), for example, difficulties result from abnormal patterns of muscle use. A person with MTD uses too much muscular effort and/or the wrong muscles to produce their voice and this can result in vocal fatigue, pain, and what sounds like laryngitis. Tension can play an important role, and many people with MTD experience tension in their muscles so long that they have almost forgotten what it feels like to relax.

So let's look at some ways to recognize tense and relaxed muscles and try a few stretches to address tension when you find it. You can start with your tongue. Try clicking your tongue and notice how it has to tense to make this sound. Now swallow. Notice how at the end of the swallow, your tongue falls to rest on the floor of your mouth. This is a relaxed tongue position.

Now notice your jaw. Let your teeth fall apart as far as they will go but keep your lips just barely together. Now go back to your tongue. Is it still on the floor of your mouth? Alternate back and forth between the tensed and relaxed positions of your tongue and jaw. Some people find that just by relaxing their tongue and jaw, their whole body becomes more relaxed.

Now try a ragdoll stretch. This can be a good way to relax the body and to reset



your posture. With a slight bend in your knees, lean forward at the waist, let your arms and head hang loose, and relax your jaw. Take a few slow, easy breaths. Then slowly start to straighten your spine but instead of lifting your head, think of “unrolling” your spine from the bottom up. Keep your head and neck relaxed and gently hanging. Your head should be the last thing that you lift gently into a neutral position. Hopefully you are now standing with a slight bend in the knees, your spine vertically aligned, and in a neutral posture.

These are just a couple of the many exercises that a speech-language pathologist might assign to help you address muscle tension possibly affecting your voice. However, it is important to note that if changes in your voice last for more than two weeks, you should see your family doctor for a referral to an otolaryngologist (ENT). ENTs are specialist physicians who

diagnose disorders such as MTD, and are able to request an endoscopic evaluation of your vocal chords to make sure there are no other processes at work.

Tips for Stretching

1. Sometimes to feel relaxation, we need to tense our muscles first.
2. Click your tongue and then swallow. Notice how your tongue falls to the floor of your mouth after you swallow. This is a relaxed position
3. Notice your jaw. Let your teeth fall apart but keep your lips just barely together. Where is your tongue? Still relaxed?
4. Try a ragdoll stretch to find a neutral posture. **B**

Caitlin Buchel is the owner and managing clinician of the Buchel Speech & Language Group, a private speech-language pathology (SLP) practice offering services in Winnipeg, and throughout Manitoba.



A practical guide for caregivers: **Balancing work and care**



By **Wendy Sutton**, *Where Next? A Path for Caregivers* wherenxt.blogspot.ca

The Canadian Human Rights Act dictates that when *an employee must care for a family member, employers have a legal obligation to accommodate that employee... employees, employers and unions must cooperate to find reasonable and practical solutions.*

For most of us teaching is a large part of our identity. We are not looking for

time away from our classrooms. We are looking for solutions to continuing our work while meeting increased family obligations.

I love my job. I pack my time off with Mom's appointments so that I don't have to take as much time from work. I found myself waiting for Christmas holidays to end, so that I could get

back to work (my respite!). Everyone around me thought I was crazy. I know caregivers get it though! It's so difficult when my responsibilities with my Mom would encroach on my work. I dropped down to 75% time, in order to have to take less time off for Mom....but I wish I could still work full-time.

– Carol

The Magnitude

Support for caregivers is a legitimate and increasing issue in today's workplace. As the number of seniors grows, so does the need for families to take on increasing responsibility for their care. Unfortunately there are still too many of us who are ignorant of the magnitude of the current situation.

- 70% of caregivers work full time. This number has tripled in the last 15 years.
- 35% of employed Canadians are also providing informal care to a family member or friend.
- By 2026, over 2.4 million Canadians age 65+ will require unpaid continuing care supports, up 71 per cent from 2011. By 2046, this number will reach nearly 3.3 million. A third of Manitoba teachers are caregivers.

I've been caring for my dad who has Parkinson's and dementia. I didn't tell anyone at work. But last week when I sat down with my principal to discuss my professional growth plan I apologized and explained what I'd been going through.

Her response surprised me. "Do not apologize! This is a serious situation. You and I are going to get together next week to come up with an action plan that will help you care for your dad and give your best to your students."

Our action plan made it possible for me to attend my dad's appointments. If my dad's doctor called, someone would watch my class so that I could take the call in private. My professional commitments are manageable. We have a plan in place in case of a crisis.

- John

Valuable support documents

The following documents not only outline the case for support but also offer valuable solutions.

1. Manitoba's Caregiver Recognition Act (2011), the first provincial act of its kind in Canada.
2. A Guide to Balancing Work and Caregiving Obligations: collaborative approaches for a supportive and well-performing

workplace. The Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2014.

3. *When Work and Caregiving Collide: How Employers Can Support Their Employees Who Are Caregivers.* The report commissioned by the Government of Canada, 2015.

We can spot a Care Aware workplace right away because the program is so visible. We see supports in lunch room posters, in the employee newsletters and company emails. When a program is visible we know the commitment is there.

- Manitoba Caregiver Coalition

Practice Self Care

Did you know that caregivers experience chronic health conditions twice the rate of general population?

Take care of yourself. What may be possible in the short term cannot be sustained over years.

Set boundaries. There needs to be realistic expectations on both sides – caregivers as well as the senior they care for.

Assert your right to support from your family. Assert your right to support from health and social services. Access available respite.

Connect to a power source. How many of us have spent an hour trouble-shooting our computer only to discover a loose power cord? Counselling, support groups, seminars, books, websites and other caregivers are all sources of power. Caregiving is not a DIY project. PLUG IN!

Reduce stress and guilt. Find and follow wise advice. Beware the old standby, "You could cope if only you exercised more, ate healthier and got more sleep". At best this minimizes the situation and at worst it blames the victim.

My 11 year old grandson recently told me, "Granny, I can't do school without recess." Plan some adult recess. Choose something where you have to sign up and pay up. That way you won't back out. Spend time with people who make you laugh.

Further Reading

1. *The Manitoba Caregiver Recognition Act (2011)*
2. *Guide to Balancing Work and*



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Caregiving Obligations: Collaborative Approaches for a Supportive and Well-performing Workplace. (2014). Canadian Human Rights Commission.

3. *When Work and Caregiving Collide: How Employers Can Support Their Employees Who Are Caregivers.* (2015.) *Employment and Social Development Canada.*
4. *Future Care for Canadian Seniors: A Status Quo Forecast.* Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada, 2015 **B**

Wendy Sutton is the creator of Where Next? A Path for Caregivers. She is a retired teacher from River East Transcona School Division.

Financial literacy: Is buying a home on one income the right decision?



By Brian Denysuik, Creditaïd www.creditaïd.ca

I often get asked what my thoughts are on buying a home as a single person. In today's society the ultimate dream is home ownership. With this being the case, the question becomes: is this realistic? There is really no simple answer and you really need to sit down and answer a series of questions. The answers will help you arrive at the right conclusion for you, it will most likely be a different answer for each of us if we approach this from a realistic point of view. The key is to base your decision on your unique situation, not on what everyone else may be recommending for you.

Here are 3 critical steps you need to do when considering or exploring the option of homeownership:

1. Create a detailed budget in the rental world. Include all spending especially the financial demands of your social life, hobbies, savings and other key priorities of your life.
2. Do a second budget and remove the rental items and include: property tax estimate, hydro, water, home insurance, on-going repair estimates. Once you have these numbers and you have accounted for all annual required misc savings that you will put away for monthly, what is left is the amount of mortgage payment you can afford.
3. Now if you are happy with your numbers from the steps above it is time to meet with your financial institution or mortgage broker to get pre-approved and see what amount of mortgage your payment will buy. Be very careful not to buy more mortgage money than what your budget can afford.

The three steps above are critical for your initial evaluation to determine if you can afford homeownership. The next few questions are just as important as you work through this self-evaluation as this becomes the personal side of the decision.

1. Do I enjoy yard work?
 - a. How much time do I have to do the required yard work?
 - b. Would I rather be doing other things than yard work?
2. Am I handy enough to do a few household repairs myself?
 - a. If yes, great, but if not, who will I be able to rely on for some help?
 - b. Do I have an amount budgeted to pay someone for any repairs that might surface?
3. Will I be sacrificing too many other things in life that are important to me if I need to take care of a home?
4. If things get tough would I be prepared to have someone else live with me who I could charge rent?
5. If homeownership is not for me what will it cost me to sell?
6. Should I actually rent a home for a year to "live the experience" before making a final decision if this is right for me?

If you have arrived at a conclusion that your budget will work and this is something that you really want, then go for it! Many of us however make a decision without really understanding that home ownership is very time consuming and requires work. We don't want to be "throwing away our money" by paying rent over many years so we sacrifice everything for homeownership.

Lately there are some new suggestions being made that can help you look at



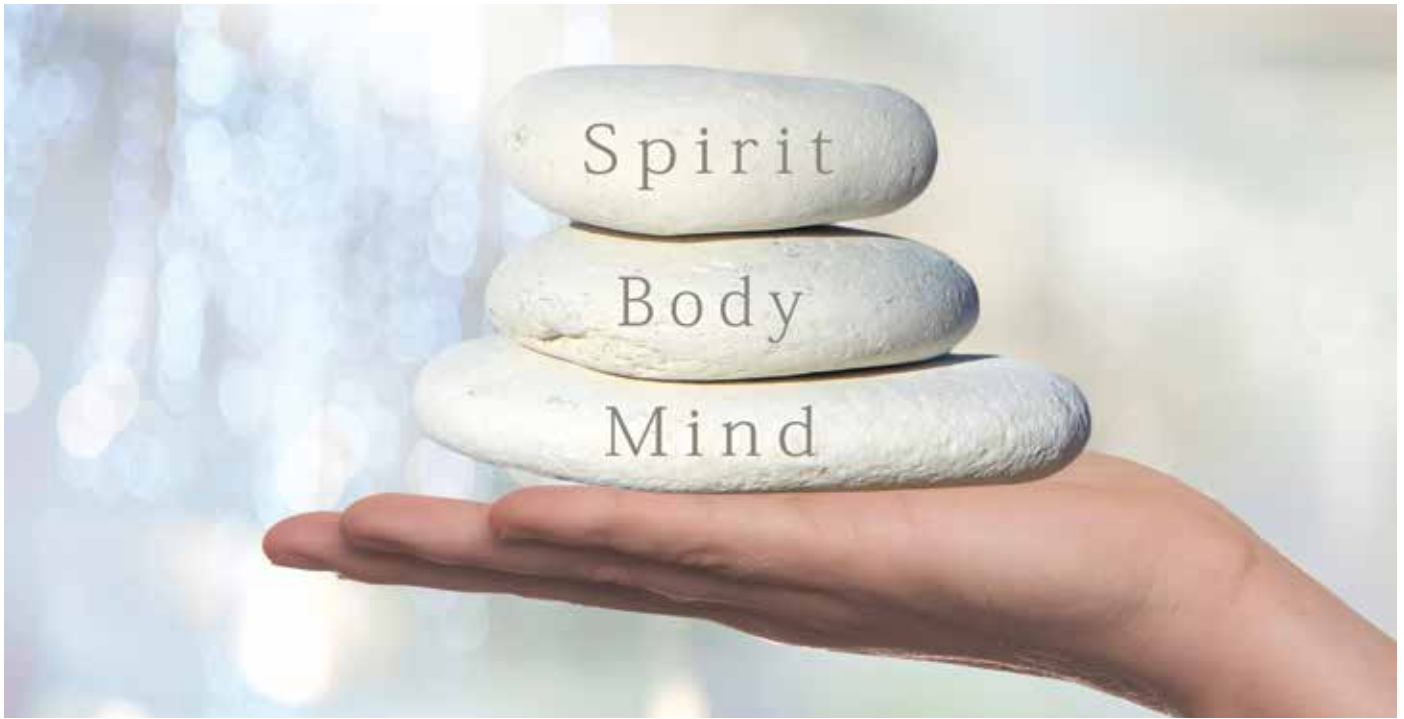
If you have arrived at a conclusion that your budget will work and this is something that you really want, then go for it! Many of us however make a decision without really understanding that home ownership is very time consuming and requires work.

renting in a different way. What some experts are saying is that you should determine the total cost difference between renting and homeownership. If you add in all the real required costs of repairs over a monthly basis you will have more accurate numbers to compare. We do have a tendency to forget about the extra costs that come with homeownership.

If you calculate the true difference between renting and homeownership and were to invest the difference in a fairly aggressive product how do the numbers compare in 25 years? Did you really miss the mark if you used this strategy in making your overall decision? Does your total investment and growth look similar to the equity that would have accumulated in a home?

This is interesting food for thought as home ownership is considered for your individual living arrangements. **B**

Brian Denysuik is a local credit counsellor and registered insolvency counsellor at Creditaïd who has been in the financial services industry for over 35 years.



Yoga practice: Clean our bodies with a twist

By Tally Young



If you think about it, we are designed to feel when it is time to “clean out” our desks, homes, cars whenever the feeling of being overwhelmed by the untidiness of the surroundings gets to be too much.

Our bodies are no different. One of the most effective ways to clean our bodies is to twist. Nothing fancy, just a nice simple supine twist held for five minutes on each side is effective enough to nourish the spine, and open the lower back muscles to the top of the leg, leaving us feeling refreshed and full of space.

Twists by design are created to move the nutrients through the spine and back muscles. If you think of a sponge, you dip it in water and it becomes so full and heavy making it awkward to work with. However, if you twist and squeeze the sponge, it becomes light and ready to do the work of cleaning. It is more important

as we age to twist, as the older we get, the more forward movements in our day. Everyday lives have compressed our tissues leaving us with a fatigued, heavy feeling in our bodies.

All you need to have around you for this posture is – two folded blankets, an eye pillow (or clean sock) and a yoga mat (or comfortable blanket on the floor). If you would like, a timer for the 5 minute hold.

1. Find a space of quiet comfort, free of distractions like dishes and housework. Lay on your back, place your eye pillow on your eyes and take in 20 full breaths.
2. Bring your knees up to the ceiling with the flats of your feet on the floor. Feel for the hipbones and ensure they are both on the ground. This helps with the feeling of being grounded.

3. Drop both of your knees softly to the right. If your knees are spaced apart when they reach their resting point, place the folded blanket in between the knees. If there is still a feeling of tightness there, place the second blanket between the bottom knee and the floor.

4. Place the timer in a space you can easily turn it off, then gently place the eye pillow on to your eyes. Fully exhale, then fully inhale and completely relax into the posture. Part of the fun is leaving the timer out and just enjoy the breathing until your body tells you to switch sides.

5. Move to the other side.
Enjoy the moments of pure joy, ease and peace. **B**



Clarity over clutter: Downsizing and moving

By Susan Macaulay, Clarity over Clutter



Moving to a new home can be a very big job. Not knowing where to start in the process can be a reason for not doing anything until you absolutely have to.

Moving may be something that has to be done as a result of health, financial or job related issues. Being proactive instead of reactive will reduce extra stress in this transition.

If you are planning on moving from a large house to a smaller house, or to a condo or an apartment, try to view the property ahead of time to give you a better idea of what the layout and storage space is like. If possible, request a floor plan to decide what will fit into the new home.

If you have not found a new home at this point, you can view some properties to give you an idea of what layouts and storage is available.

Being aware of the reduced space compared to the current house will help in the decision making process of what will fit in the new home and what will not.

One area that can be forgotten in the planning process is the use of a basement. If you live in a house with a basement, you may not realize the amount of items that are stored. Imagine not having the use of the basement. Where would all that stuff go?

When working on the downsizing process focus on one area at a time. Schedule blocks of time to work on it. It could be daily or weekly.

Write out a list of what you want to do.

For some people, once the task is completed, placing a checkmark or stroking it out, gives a feeling of accomplishment.

A 'To Do List' is just a wish list until you schedule it.

To set up for the process have boxes for packing up items for donate, clear bags for soft goods for donate, black bags for garbage, recycle bin, and boxes or bins for

repacking the 'keep' items.

Make sure to label the contents of the boxes that you are keeping. Include on the label the contents and the location in the new home that they will be kept in. This will make it easier when it is time for the move.

The sort and edit process may be difficult for some items as you really enjoy them, but in the new home, you may not have the room or the need for them.

Some examples might be: yard maintenance supplies, outdoor furnishings and ornaments, seasonal decorations, large collections of books, linens, furniture, sporting goods, tools, and many more.

There are various ways to pass these items on. Offer them to family or friends, try to sell them online, a garage sale, arrange to take them to auction, a consignment store, or donate to a charitable organization. Some charitable organizations will give you a tax receipt for donated items.

This can be a difficult time to work through the letting go of items. If you are able to, have another person help you. Talk out your feelings and thoughts about the items as you make the decision to let them go. It is a way to help bring closure. Remember what you want your new home to look like and how you want it to function will help in the decision making process.

By not taking the time to go through this process prior to a move, you may end up with stacks of boxes and excess furniture in your new home. This will just add to the frustration and stress of the move, and not allow you to settle in as quickly.

If you are planning on selling your house, pick a target date for listing. Then schedule time in your day planner backward from the target date to schedule times to get the downsizing process done weeks or months in advance. This will lessen your stress.

If selling is not part of the process, choose

a target date for getting the downsizing process done by scheduling in your day planner backward from the target date to work on it.

Scheduling and working on tasks in smaller chunks of time and areas is easier than trying to do a whole room in one session.

Downsizing and moving a loved one

Discussing downsizing and moving with a loved one can be a very difficult conversation to start and have, but a necessary one. It can be beneficial to have this conversation when there is no urgency.

You may be involved with helping a parent or elderly family member prepare for a move. They may be moving to a condo, apartment, assisted living, or another living arrangement.

Taking the time to break the discussion into small bits at a time, on different occasions is helpful. Allowing a person to think about it and come to a decision themselves is encouraged. Being in control of their own decisions on items to keep for the new home, and items that will not be moved with them, is much better than having someone else do that for them.

Years of living in their house with cherished items and having emotional attachment can make the decision making process a lot harder.

If there are circumstances that do not allow the person to be part of the decision making process, it can be added stress for them, along with the stress of what they may be dealing with.

Trying to reduce some of the stress during the downsizing process is important. **B**

Susan Macaulay of Clarity Over Clutter is a Professional Organizer who works with individuals, and families to create and enjoy a functional home. Susan specializes, as well, working with those who are dealing with Chronic Disorganization and/or Hoarding.

Keith's corner:

Tips for connecting to your intuition



By Keith Macpherson www.keithmacpherson.ca

There I was in Gimli, Manitoba enjoying a lovely day off with one of my best friends, Mark. We found ourselves in a tiny boutique store that is quite famous in the area for its custom one of a kind items and a really great collection of self-development books.

I wandered over to the bookshelf that had a number of my favorite book titles and began to read one of Deepak Chopra's books all about the power of synchronicity. As I stood there reading, an awkward argument broke out in the store between a customer and one of the sales ladies. It was impossible to ignore the disagreement as their voices escalated in volume, arguing over who should pay the cost for a fragile item that broke as a result of the customer's young daughter running around in the store. Back and forth the two of them went with each comment getting more and more heated. A few moments later my friend Mark, who is known for his fun and evoking personality, came up beside me and whispered, "What would Deepak do?". Upon hearing his comment I felt an inner whisper pop up within my consciousness telling me that I should do something about this. I immediately put my book down and walked over to the two women who were at this point fully engaged in a battle of insults between one another.

I kindly suggested that they both just take a deep breath and let the issue subside. I even offered to pay for the damaged item. All of this was being directed by an inner presence that was almost taking over me. I suggested that they both make up with a hug and move on with their day. With great hesitation they surprisingly exchanged in an awkward hug and carried on with their day. Peace immediately filled the store again and everyone seemed to go back to

their own business at hand.

I am very often in awe of the immediate inner knowing that can take over us in a present moment. I typically would not have stepped in to break up an argument between two people, justifying in my mind that it truly would be none of my business to interfere. However, by listening to this silent whisper within myself not only was I able to bring peace back into the store but further to this it turns out that my actions rippled in an even greater way that I could not have predicted at the time.

A week following the "Gimli episode" I received a phone call from my mother who asked if I had recently been visiting Gimli. I affirmed this to be true and she went on to tell me that the boss at her work had called together the staff for a Monday morning meeting. At the beginning of the meeting my mother's boss began to share the story about a young man that she recognized while recently on a trip to Gimli from his appearance on the Canadian reality TV show, "Canadian Idol" (on which I was a finalist back in 2006) and how he had brought peace and resolution to a heated argument between two people in a small store. She used this story as a way to convey the message that we never know the impact that we will have and that the small steps we take can have a major influence on the people around us. Upon hearing this further sequel to the events that took place in Gimli I was immediately given confirmation that my actions were orchestrated by an inner knowing that I have come to call "Intuition."

Trusting our intuition

The word "Intuition" when dissected ultimately translates into "intuit" or inner teacher. This is one of the most valuable tools that we have accessible to us at all times. In the mindfulness framework that

I teach, our intuition helps us to make decisions and connect to what I refer to as "the flow". When we trust our intuition we are led to experiences and events that just seem to connect to a deeper place of meaning and purpose.

If you have been struggling to find answers in your life to any question and have been lacking inspiration, perhaps it is time to begin developing the relationship with your intuition. One of the simplest ways to begin developing a relationship with our intuition is a practice that I ironically learned while studying with Deepak Chopra a few months ago. I invite you to read over the instructions to this practice that I will share with you now and then try it out for yourself.

The practice of trusting yourself:

Close your eyes and place one hand on your heart center. Take a few deep breaths and focus your mind on your heart. Trust that your heart has wisdom to share with you. Silently ask the following question and listen carefully for the first impulsive answer that pops up. Ask your heart "What do you truly want"? Be aware that the first answer is the intuitive one. Anything following this will most likely be the busy monkey mind that over analyzes everything. Upon hearing the immediate knowing, take action and trust yourself.

If you trust and act on the inner whispers that pop up from within yourself there is a great chance that you will be led towards the perfect places, at the perfect time and given all the answers needed to journey through this life. Perhaps it's time to mindfully begin to trust yourself. **B**

Keith Macpherson is a motivational speaker, yoga instructor, life coach and recording artist. To connect further with Keith Macpherson and to sign up for his daily inspirational email and other free gifts, visit: <http://www.keithmacpherson.ca>

You are important! It's time to put you first.



By Sofia Costantini

In life my greatest challenge has been creating balance and finding time for me. I teach dance full-time in the Winnipeg School Division, run a dance company and have been the sole provider of my son for the past 22 years. Like many, this means managing a career, family and all the day-to-day chores, finances and activities that require attention at home.

When I'm at work, I strive to be completely engaged with the students, comply with all the expectations of the division, participate in extra activities to build morale and do my best to get along with my colleagues. When I'm done teaching I'm usually working on business related projects, provide for my son, help my parents or run errands.

Like me, is it difficult for you to say no? Do you feel pressure to give more but then don't always feel appreciated for what you do? Do you feel pulled in many directions because everyone needs something from you and then there's nothing left to give to yourself?

Your circumstances may be different but the feeling of being overwhelmed by your situation may be similar.

I used to let a lot of things get to me because I didn't know how to release the negativity I felt. What has worked for me is shifting my perspective and focusing on being "in the moment". I try not to dwell on the past or worry about what's to come. I find when I'm in the moment instead of just going through the act of doing it's easier to manage stress and appreciate what is important. Consider the benefits of nurturing your spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual needs to fuel you in a positive way so that you can then give effectively to others.

Decide what makes you happy. What do you need? Let me remind you, you deserve, you are worthy, you are important.



Five things you can begin doing to put yourself first:

1. **Be kind to your mind:** Begin to change your perspective about yourself and your life. Remove all criticism. Every negative thought you find yourself thinking immediately replace it with a kind, positive thought. It will take consistent practice to change this pattern but it will eventually start reversing the negative energy you carry.
2. **Be kind to your body:** Begin to care for your body. Regular exercise is essential. Taking the stairs is one of the most effective ways to get your heart rate up. Work towards walking as often as you can. Choose healthy food options and drink plenty of water.
3. **Be kind to yourself:** Do one nice thing for yourself everyday. It can be as simple as dressing up to make yourself feel good, treat yourself to a

specialty drink, schedule a lunch date with a friend or it can be as elaborate as playing golf with a buddy, booking a therapy session, massage or spa day.

4. **Make time for yourself:** Provide yourself with 20 minutes of uninterrupted alone time to reflect and unwind. It might be a 20-minute meditation, drinking a coffee on the porch, driving to work without music, time in your classroom/office with the lights off and door closed, lighting a candle and having a bath.
5. **Breathe:** Remind yourself to slow down your breathing as this allows you to calm down. When inhaling, focus on taking in positive energy and then release all negative energy from your body on the exhale. Do this 3-5 times in a row. Pay attention to the change in your posture and tension.

Making change takes time and patience. You can do it! Remember, you're enough! **B**



Who let the dogs in? MTS

The dog days of summer hit MTS in July. Well, at least on one day.

That was when employees were encouraged to bring their dogs to work and chances are it will become an annual event at the Society.

"There were no problems at all," says MTS General Secretary Bobbi Taillefer, who showed up with her keeshond, Dakota (both posing for the cover of this magazine). "It was a really positive experience and we would definitely do it again."

The idea of a take-your-dog-to-work day began almost 20 years ago in the United States as a way to uplift employees and draw attention to the need for people to adopt homeless dogs.

MTS's involvement began after the Winnipeg Free Press publicized that its workplace was undertaking an experiment in which employees were allowed to bring their dogs to work on certain days.

Taillefer says some MTS staff thought it would be a good idea here.

"I thought it was a good time to try it," she says. "Benefits that we heard about from the Winnipeg Free Press – people's mood improved, it encouraged employee

interaction and it was fun."

The results were pretty much the same at MTS.

There were a number of rules set out beforehand, with a plan for a dog-free area if anyone had concerns about allergies. However, there were none.

Rules included:

- Your dog must be sociable (not just friendly with people but with other dogs) and obedient.
- Staff will be responsible for the safety and behavior of their dog and will accompany their dog at all times.
- Staff bringing dogs to work must bring all the necessary supplies to make the dog comfortable (dog bed, leash, chew toy, water dish, treats, cleaning supplies to wipe up spills, bags to p/u waste outside, etc.)

All participants brought donations for an animal shelter, resulting in a pile of contributions.

"Our employees are very generous," Taillefer says.

There have been a number of studies illustrating the benefits of having one's dog in their workplace. In its explanation of the project, the Free Press pointed to a study from Central Michigan University. It

found that "dogs lower stress, heart rate and blood pressure." It also concluded that it increased co-operation among work groups.

While the idea is more difficult to implement in schools, there have been instances where schools have undertaken both bring-your-pet-to-school and bring-your-dog-to-school days.

The original Take-Your-Dog-To-Work Day was created by Pet Sitters International in 1999 as a way to show non-dog owners the benefits of having a doggie companion and encourage adoptions from rescue groups, shelters and humane societies.

The Winnipeg Humane Society says there are a number of benefits to adopting pets, including reducing stress and feelings of loneliness, encouraging owners to exercise by walking their pets, increasing interactions with other dog owners and teaching lessons of compassion and responsibility.

"A pet can also be a learning tool for families with young children," it says. "Kids who learn about empathy and respect for animals from a young age can put forth those values to the people around them, helping make the world a better place." **B**

Four benefits of adopting a pet



By Winnipeg Humane Society

Adopting a pet is a big responsibility that helps an animal in many ways. When you adopt a pet, you are giving a homeless animal a place to call home. When an animal is adopted their lives change for the better, but a human's life also benefits. Animals bring an abundance of gains to our well-being.

1. Pets are as calming as a kitten's purr

A stressful day at work is diminished when going home and you're greeted by a purring cat or the wagging tail of a dog. Pets improve a person's mood by being a relaxing presence in the room and a constant source of joy in life. When pets are around, a person's mood can improve and reduce feelings of loneliness.

Having a pet is a rewarding responsibility. Our furry friends need care and this creates a consistent routine in the process. These routines bring clarity and peace of mind, giving you the chance to focus on your pet's companionship. Some studies suggest that having a pet can even reduce blood pressure and lessen anxiety.

2. Dogs and exercise go paw-in-hand

Your dog is the best exercise buddy you could ask for. Just like humans, pets require frequent exercise to remain healthy and fit. Taking your dog on a walk (or perhaps hikes and swims if you're feeling adventurous) is a great way to stay active. Having a dog is a reason to go outside, get moving and explore the world around you. These are all things that lead to a healthier lifestyle.

3. Your pet can make you a social butterfly

Your endorphins won't be the only thing boosted while out for a walk. So does the likelihood of positive social interactions with people in the



community. Pets provide an ideal 'ice-breaker' for conversations with strangers. 'How old is she?' or 'What kind of breed is he?' are common questions asked when someone meets your dog on the street for the first time. Many people share a mutual love of pets, making them a natural conversation starter. This creates new friendships – and even love connections – along the way.

These types of positive interactions lead to an improvement in emotional health, raise self-esteem and worth.

4. Pet adoption teaches lessons of compassion and responsibility

Welcoming a furry friend into your life can bring out the best in you. The

responsibility of a pet comes with the added values of compassion, patience, and empathy – all principles that we can use more of in our lives. When we treat our pets with these humane values, it's easier to share that same love with the people around us.

A pet can also be a learning tool for families with young children. Kids who learn about empathy and respect for animals from a young age can put forth those values to the people around them, helping make the world a better place. **B**

Posture issues: The importance of balance



By **Chelsea White, BSc (Kin), C.A.T (c)**

We all remember playing hop scotch as children, trying to land that perfect jump off a moving swing, spinning around in circles trying not to fall over after; all of these aspects of play challenged our balance and proprioception. We thought all we were doing was playing and having fun but unknowingly, we were developing our gross motor skills.

What is balance and proprioception?

Balance, much like agility, is an outcome of our proprioceptive system. In a gym you might hear trainers speak about incorporating balance and proprioception, trying to train it or use it in strength development and skill refinement. But honing this skill goes far beyond athletic performance. It roots itself into our body to help us find balance (homeostasis) and prevent injury.

Our nervous system collects this information and sends it to our brain and connects it all together, allowing our bodies to properly orientate itself. This is referred to as kinesthesia (sense of movement).

Many of us may have experienced what happens when we lose one of our feedback systems or if they are not functioning optimally. Some common examples such as an inner ear infection that causes the world to spin when we move our head, the unsteady feeling your joint has after an injury or the challenge of staying balanced when we try to stand on one foot with our eyes closed. The simple fact is if you don't use it, you lose it and if you lose it the likelihood of injury increases.

Doing activities that challenge our balance are very important to our bodies overall wellness. It is one of the fundamental goals of rehabilitation we want to achieve with patients after injury. It is also a fundamental training tool for injury prevention. The more you challenge



your proprioception, the more efficient it becomes and your reaction time improves.

We have all experienced moments in life where we have lost our balance on a slippery surface or tripped over a shoe. With inefficient proprioception we can come crashing to the ground, roll an ankle or break a wrist. But, if we train our balance and agility we can decrease the opportunities for injury to occur.

This training becomes more important as we age as our systems slow down and the outcomes of falling are more catastrophic. We just don't recover as we did when we were younger. Training this aspect of our system doesn't have to be fancy or use any equipment. It can progress from simply standing on one foot in a doorway to running agility drills.

It depends on what your goals are. When working with patients, refining and improving proprioception is an integral part of injury prevention and recovery, regardless of the body part.

Since we spend a majority of our time

on our feet it is important to consider some simple but surprisingly challenging exercises.

First, stand in a doorway with your shoes off, as this makes it more challenging as your shoes give stability and damper feedback. Flex one of your hips to forty-five degrees and try to hold this position for fifteen seconds. If this is easy for you then close your eyes, to eliminate your visual feedback, and see if you feel the wobble. You can even try standing on a pillow, you now have an unstable surface to challenge those joint and muscle receptors in the foot, ankle, knee, hip, and core.

If you want an even greater challenge and progression, go and play a little hop scotch which will require you to balance and coordinate your movements. I bet you will even smile a little too. That is an important thing in exercise, enjoying what you are doing, challenging your mind and body, and a little laughter never hurts. Perfect the simple things; your body will thank you. **B**



Bike with your family

By Jessie Klassen and Green Action Centre

Are you thinking of biking with your family this summer? Cycling is a great way to explore your neighbourhood, get exercise, fresh air, and spend time together as a family. Green Action Centre has compiled a list of resources for cycling safely.

Biking with toddlers and preschoolers

Child bike seats: Child bike seats are widely available and can be purchased to either go on the front or back of your bike. Several popular brands include Yepp, Thule, and Adams. Child seats are designed for children aging from about 9 months through to 3 years, but check with your specific manufacturer. Child bike seats can allow you to chat with your child throughout the journey. The added weight of your child on your bike can take some getting used to. Practice makes perfect!

Child trailers: Child bike trailers are a common sight around town in the summer months. There are a number of brand options available, including Thule, Wike and Burley. Check with the accompanying manual, or the manufacturer's website in terms of age and weight restrictions. Some of the models even have excellent trunk space for groceries and kid gear.

Tag-alongs: For kids ages 3-6 or 7 who are ready to start pedaling but not quite ready to bike on their own for longer journeys, the tag-along is a great option. The tag-along

is a child's bike minus the front wheel, and attaches to the seat post of your bike. The tag-along lets your child pedal behind you, but you are completely in control of turning, breaking and general bike travel and safety. Several popular brands include Adams, WeeRide and MEC. There are even tandem tag-alongs available, so that you can attach two youngsters to your bicycle.

Bike helmets: Legislation in Manitoba requires children and youth under 18 to wear a helmet while cycling. Wearing your own helmet will also keep you safer and model the behaviour for your children. To adjust helmets, use the 2, V, 1 rule.

- 2: No more than two fingers should fit between your eyebrows and the edge of your helmet.
- V: The straps on the sides of your helmet should form a V around your ears.
- 1: Just one finger should fit between your chin strap and your chin.

Biking with children and youth

Once your children are ready to bike on their own, the basic rules of the road for cyclists and drivers is a must. MPI has prepared a kid-friendly brochure for ages 3-9, *I Cycle Safely*. If you need to brush up on your own cycling skills, MPI also offers an adult version of the guide, *Cycle Safely*.

I Cycle Safely: <https://www.mpi.mb.ca/en/PDFs/KidsCyclingBrochure.pdf>

Cycle Safely: <https://www.mpi.mb.ca/en/PDFs/AdultsCyclingBooklet.pdf>

Planning your route: Use a city cycling map to plan your route. Look for quiet residential streets, protected bike lanes, and multi-use paths.

Winnipeg Cycling Map: <http://www.winnipeg.ca/publicworks/pedestriansCycling/maps/default.stm>

Photo Guide to Winnipeg Cycling Infrastructure: <http://greenactioncentre.ca/healthy-travel/winnipeg-cycling-infrastructure-deciphered>

Brandon Bike and Trail Map: <http://www.brandon.ca/images/pdf/Recreation/shareTheRoads.pdf>

Thompson Active Transportation Map: <http://www.thompson.ca/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=1000>

Final tips to ensure a smooth ride

Rest stops: Whether your youngsters are hanging out in a bike trailer or on their own bikes, they'll need to take breaks, stretch and have some healthy snacks along the way.

Water: Kids are thirsty creatures. Always bring more water than you think you'll need.

Lock it up: Don't forget to bring your U-locks; 1 lock per bike or trailer. **B**

Green Action Centre is a non-profit organization based in Winnipeg, serving Manitoba. For more information visit greenactioncentre.ca.



wellness FORUM

Please join us for The Manitoba Teachers' Society's 5th Annual Wellness Forum

Save the Date
Saturday, November 18, 2017

The 2017 Wellness Forum planning committee is pleased to offer this exciting event for the fifth year in a row!

The event will include training in wellness programming, guest speakers, and opportunities for Wellness Chairs to network and plan with their colleagues.

BALANCE
mind body spirit
THE MANITOBA TEACHERS' SOCIETY



The
Manitoba
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Society

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