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Editorial

Life offers us many challenges and in this edition of Traidhos Quarterly we focus on wellbeing in its broadest possible sense.

The word wellbeing has been around since the early 1600s and refers to the general condition of an individual or group that is positive. Attributes of wellbeing include health, comfort and happiness.

Is wellbeing simply the way we view life, or is it a conscious physical and mental practice that leads us to a state of wellbeing?

To answer this question, articles by contributing authors examine how food and fluids can affect health, how connection to nature can alter mindset, and how physical and mental health can be obtained through the regular practice of yoga.

So where does happiness fit? Happiness, as an element of wellbeing, can be achieved through social inclusion and community participation. Articles that address issues of social inclusion for wellbeing include the Traidhos Visiting Schools Programme in the hill-tribe regions of Chiang Mai, the new Prem student-run Boarding Bites café which focuses on healthy eating, and Accessible Yoga practice that embraces inclusion at all levels, ages and ability.

An inquiry into wellbeing is not complete without exploring the mind. Being mindful of our thoughts, words and actions can lead to a more positive life. Dealing with life's challenges by staying in the present moment and controlling inner dialogue is discussed in an article on wellness of the mind.

We finish our journey through this edition of Traidhos Quarterly with six easy steps to positive thinking.

Wellbeing and happiness is in our hands.

Editor
Elspeth McEachern

Traidhos and Prem staff and students extend condolences to the people of Thailand as they say their final farewell to the King. He will be sorely missed by his people and everyone who resides in this beautiful country.

The Three-Generation Community is a unique educational centre. It offers Prem Tinsulanonda International School (an IB World day and boarding school), a dynamic Visiting Schools Program, the exciting Traidhos Camps, an artists’ residency program, an educational farm and a converted rice barge used for educational environmental studies on the Chao Phraya River in and around Bangkok.

Cover Image – Seagull of wellbeing.

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Yoga and Meditation in the Curriculum

Language, yoga and meditation teacher Casey Gramaglia explores the world of yoga and meditation to show how these ancient sciences are positively influencing the curriculum.

"For liberal education to fulfil its responsibility, the teaching of contemplative skills is a necessity, not a luxury." Robert A F Thurman

There are endless studies on the benefits of incorporating yoga and meditation into the school curriculum and workplace. I am not seeking to reiterate any such findings in the following piece of writing, instead I have decided to write explicitly based upon my own experiences teaching yoga and meditation for over twenty years to both adults and young learners. As a practitioner and teacher of yoga and meditation, I was taught from the outset to always, and only, teach from my own experiences.

Yoga is a science

The ancient practices of yoga extend well beyond 4000 years and one of the foremost scholars expounding on yogic philosophy was Patanjali. Patanjali is the author of the ‘The Yoga Sutras’, a scientific text consisting of 196 aphorisms dissecting and analysing the nature of yoga, a Sanskrit word meaning ‘to yoke’ or join together. That is what yoga seeks to do; recognise interdependence; then once an individual realises the interconnectedness of all manifest phenomena, help guide others to do the same. Many scientific claims in yoga are parallel to what quantum physicists have discovered within the 20th and 21st centuries. One such notable fact being that nothing is solid; ourselves, and the matter around us, are nothing more than a mass of resonating molecules.

This can all start to sound a bit technical and you’re probably wondering how this relates to a school curriculum. When students have healthy, strong, flexible bodies and minds, they are better able to sustain single-pointed concentration and academic success is sure to follow.

In this age of information, we are constantly multitasking, some of us more so than others. Even 4000 years ago I’m sure the average lay person had survival related stresses. The question is how do we deal with stress? Stress can become a real problem, causing illnesses both physical and mental; too much stress can put a strain on the body, which eventually manifests in the form of illness and ultimately disease. Stress weakens the body’s immune system. Compounded stress also leads to a number of different mental ailments such as anxiety, frustration, anger, and depression.

Practicing a myriad of yoga postures (asana) strengthens the body, creates flexibility, regulates the hormones and strengthens the entire endocrine system. Once the body is forged in this way through establishing a regular practice of yoga postures and yogic breathing practices (pranayama), students will gain a firm foundation to begin practicing meditation.

Discipline - the path to meditation

Like any respected art form, it requires regular practice to get good at something. One of the most essential elements to mastering meditation is having the discipline to do it. In fact, there is no rational reason to avoid practice, it’s a fabrication of mind that there is something more important one could be doing. The more students practice formal meditation; simply sitting and just being with their thoughts; gradually the more comfortable they tend to feel in their practice. Students begin to look forward to our scheduled meditation classes, they know it is a time to turn inwards, to be introspective.
For most of the school day, students are challenged with an array of different subjects, from numeracy to literacy; they must constantly listen, think and respond, which requires mental stamina and energy. During meditation class however, students are taught to use the mind to observe the mind. We watch the contents of our mind, without judgement, not trying to problem-solve nor silence the mind.

The mind can only become quiet naturally, without forcing. Attempting to force the mind to stop thinking will result in more thinking. Take the analogy of a snow globe; when you shake it, it becomes impossible to see through, with snow floating everywhere; the snow being likened to our thoughts. However, once the snow settles and the movement stops, a clear image is revealed in the centre. Meditation works the same way. When we give our minds a chance to rest on a single object, concentration becomes possible. Once concentration is uninterrupted, only then can meditation occur.

For students of meditation, some days are effortless, while others are challenging and difficult. When students discipline themselves through regular practice, sitting upright on their cushions, observing thoughts like passing clouds, it creates a space between thoughts. That discerning space between one thought and the next is where creativity is born; it’s where clear insight, awareness and answers arise.

**Routine - don’t wait for tomorrow!**

Starting a yoga and meditation practice can be difficult, with our internal dialogue trying to convince us of something more important we could be doing. I am fortunate to be able to offer yoga and meditation to our students in the Intensive English Programme (IEP) twice per week. Since both classes have been incorporated into our curriculum, students just have to show up, put down their mat or cushion, and wait to practice. It becomes as natural as any other class scheduled on our students’ timetable. By creating a routine in a formal classroom environment, students quickly feel comfortable with yoga and meditation as part of their weekly classes; we are helping them to make these disciplines a natural part of their lives, much in the same way as brushing their teeth.

The same rules apply to adults, if we want to get good at something, we need to establish a routine. Routine and discipline go hand in hand. Merely reading books about yoga and meditation is not enough to experience the multitude of benefits these practices offer.
Don’t wait for tomorrow, start today! The disciplines of yoga and meditation are about quality, not quantity. Start small and grow your practice. If you are an educator interested in teaching yoga and meditation to your students, make sure that you have established a regular (daily) practice yourself first. It doesn’t require much time in the beginning, yet it does require regularity. You will quickly experience the many benefits these ancient sciences have to offer, and when you feel good, you’ll want to share that with your students and loved ones.

The secret to nurturing successful students is not only teaching them the skills to soar academically, but considering their holistic growth as well. When young learners strengthen their bodies and minds through yoga and meditation, they develop good health, empathy, concentration and confidence; these are all essential elements for creating a well-balanced, enlightened society.

Casey has been teaching yoga and meditation at Prem Tinsulanonda International School since 2012, he joined Prem as a full-time teacher in 2014 as part of the Intensive English Programme (IEP) where he incorporates meditation and yoga into the IEP curriculum.
Know your superfoods

With so many fad diets around, how do we know what’s best for us? Wellness Specialist, Judith Coulson-Geissman explores how to improve your health by including superfoods in your diet.

There is an abundant supply of easily accessible information about health and wellbeing on the market. As such, you may have read about superfoods in magic diets, drinks, or in supplements that are supposed to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

But what information is true? What evidence is based on research? And what is simply clever marketing?

Superfoods are functional foods that have been identified as providing optimal nutrition, along with additional health benefits. They are wholefoods, which are unprocessed, nutrient dense and contain disease fighting phytochemicals.

Phytochemicals, sometimes called phytonutrients, are biological active ingredients in wholefoods that perform antioxidant and hormone-like actions within your body.

The most common Phytochemicals you may have been reading about so far are: Carotenoids, Lycopene, Catechins, Flavonoids, Phenols, Indoles, Isoflavones and Phytosterols.

Phytochemicals cannot be eaten as a supplement and need to be consumed with a balanced wholefood diet.

Listed below are some of the superfoods that are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FAD) and supported by internationally accredited research.

Blueberries

Blueberries are an excellent source of fibre, folate, potassium, vitamin C and vitamin E. They contain antioxidant pigments and phytochemicals.

Studies show blueberries play a role in cancer and heart disease prevention, have anti-inflammatory and anti-aging properties, and can promote cognitive functions.

The recommended amount is half a cup a day. Blueberries can be purchased frozen, which are often more nutritious and cheaper.

Dark chocolate (75 per cent and above of cacao)

Dark chocolate contributes to low blood pressure while enhancing blood flow. Chocolate with a high cacao content is rich in flavonoids, other antioxidant properties and polyphenols.

Keep your daily dark chocolate intake to about 100 calories a day, approximately one ounce of chocolate.

Natural Greek yogurt (low fat)

Natural yogurt is rich in protein, calcium, riboflavin, vitamin B12, potassium, magnesium, zinc and conjugated linoleic acid and probiotics. Yogurt helps to control glucose and lipid metabolism, improves bone density and aids gastrointestinal health.

The recommended amount of yoghurt is 2-3 tablespoons a day.

Oats

Oats are rich in soluble fibre, minerals and vitamins, and contain polyphenols and other phytochemicals. Oats are a great food choice to lower cholesterol and blood glucose levels, and reduce the risk of certain cancer and heart disease.

Try to consume 2-3 tablespoons of unprocessed oats a day.
Oranges and other Citrus Fruits

High in vitamin C, antioxidant properties, fibre, folate, potassium, and polyphenols. Citrus fruits can boost your immune function, support your heart health, and reduce cancer risk.

*One piece of fruit a day is highly beneficial. Juice does not count as it lacks the fibre.*

Tea

Black tea and green tea, are high in antioxidants, including ECG (epigallocatechin gallate) and Catechins, that are known to prevent certain forms of cancer and heart disease. Green tea is also known to aid mental alertness.

If you include all the wholefoods listed above in your daily routine they will make the perfect breakfast!

Broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables

These vegetables are rich in polyphenols, nutrient dense with folate, fibre, calcium and vitamin C. They support the cardiovascular health, boost your immune functions, and can reduce the risk of cancer. In addition to broccoli this includes cabbage, brussel sprouts, bok choy, cauliflower, kale, arugula and collard greens.

*Try to consume one cup a day.*

Beans

Beans are a low-fat source of protein and are high in fibre, B vitamins, iron, magnesium, flavonoids and other essential nutrients and phytochemicals. The regular consumption of beans lowers cholesterol and the risk of heart disease, as well as decreasing blood sugar levels (diabetes).

*It’s recommended to eat 4-5 cups per week.*

Pumpkin, winter squash, sweet potatoes

Rich in fibre, carotenoids, antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties, potassium, pantothenic acid, magnesium, vitamin C and vitamin E. These starchy vegetables are great to control and lower blood glucose levels (diabetes).

Salmon (and other cold water fatty fish)

Salmon is a rich source of Omega 3 fatty acids, protein, B vitamins and selenium. Wild salmon is rich in astaxanthin, one of the most potent antioxidants discovered so far.

Fatty fish can lower the risk of heart disease and may offset memory loss.

*The recommendation is two servings of fatty fish per week.*

Spinach, Kale and other dark leafy greens

Very nutrient dense and rich in different flavonoids, fibre, chlorophyll, carotenoids, lutein, Vitamin A, C and K, calcium, iron, beta carotene, chromium, potassium, magnesium and B Vitamins.

Green leafy vegetables protect against stroke and coronary heart disease, age related macular degeneration, cataracts and boost immune functions.

*Try 2-3 servings a day either raw as salad, steamed or stir-fried.*

There are many more wholefoods on the list of declared ‘superfoods’ that have a positive impact on wellbeing and can prevent disease and promote health.

**Judith Coulson-Geissman** is a Certified Corporate Wellness Specialist, Nutrition and Lifestyle Coach. For the past 15 years she has been an author, speaker, coach and consultant in Asia and Europe. Judith has focused her ongoing education and research on the effects of nutrition, lifestyle choices and community culture on wellbeing and health. Her quest to understand how and why people make choices inspired her to study the science of applied behaviour economics, choice architecture and positive psychology for the past couple of years.
The emergence of the ecological Self

The impact of nature in a child’s (and adult’s) health has been proven through countless research. Studies have suggested that contact with nature improves mental health, heart health, weight management, stress and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). Outdoor learning experiences are also known to teach about critical life skills and creativity. Immersion in nature is a central concept of childhood and it teaches resilience and risk. These are all important experiences to nurture in one’s life, however, nature connection goes beyond that.

Everyday more and more children are leaving the woods.

It is crucial to discern the difference between nature connection and contact with nature. Contact with nature could be walking your dog or going for a run in the park. It is about being in natural environments, for example going for a hike, camping, spending time at the beach or having an environmental education class. In situations like these one is in direct contact with nature, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that they are connected to nature. Nevertheless, contact with nature is imperative for one’s health and can be a gateway to a more deeper connection.

On the other hand, nature connection is concerned with values and feelings which are experienced intuitively rather than rationally. It is not only about being in natural places, but becoming one with it. Through practices of nature connection children may develop an awareness that we are part of the natural world, we are part of a network of inseparable relationships.

“We are like the cells in the body of the vast living organism that is planet Earth” explains the American psychologist Ralph Metzner (1993) in his article ‘The Split Between Spirit and Nature in European Consciousness’. The understanding of this complex interconnected system can be developed since early age and it is based in an intimate bond with the natural world.

Changing old mindsets

Even though centuries have passed, mainstream society is still guided by Francis Bacon (1571-1626) when he said that “Nature takes orders from man and works under his authority”. From this perspective one assumes that nature has an instrumental value to humans and that we have sovereignty over the natural world. Bacon’s teachings places humans disconnected from nature, perceiving and exploring
the natural world, as resources. Nature connection puts this current paradigm in check and begins to explore the notion of an ecocentric or biocentric worldview, where nature is at the centre of our relations.

This endeavour includes the reformulation of human identity, that is, the way we perceive our self and the way we perceive what surrounds us. Nature connection creates a qualitative relationship with the natural world and it grows an ecological identity.

The ecological Self

The notion of the ecological Self was coined by the Norwegian philosopher and ecologist Arne Naess in 1973. The ecopsychologist Joanna Macy describes the ecological Self as the “wider sense of identity that arises when self-interest includes the natural world”. Macy also states that when we include the natural world, we are brought into a much larger story of who and what we are. When recognizing ourselves as part of the living body of Earth we are open to a state of wellbeing.

Opposite to the concept of physical health, wellbeing cannot be measured in quantitative terms. It is subjective to one’s identity and values. Wellbeing is understood as “intuitive inner feelings and beliefs that give purpose, meaning and values to life”, described by John W. Fisher, PhD in his article ‘The Four Domains Model: Connecting Spirituality, Health and Well-Being’.

With collective support, children can begin to cultivate the ecological Self and recognise that the natural world is not based in separation. Nature is within, as it is outwards. There are no boundaries between one Self and the larger human community or the more-than-human community. The barriers one experience in mainstream society and individuality are a social construct. Nature connection means to become aware that the natural world is at-one with the human community, which is at-one with itself.

The early development of the ecological Self shapes a child’s worldview and implies a profound transformation of values. In a biocentric paradigm one is more likely to keep engaged and consider the natural world in their daily and future actions. As Arne Naess states, “If reality is experienced by the ecological Self, our behaviour naturally and beautifully follows norms of strict environmental ethics.”
Being at one with nature

Nature connection develops an understanding of equality, that is to say; in the biosphere, all things have the same right to live and flourish as parts of an interconnected whole. It doesn’t separate humans from nature. Through nature connection, one perceives the intrinsic value of nature, understanding how the natural world must be seen as a subject, regardless of its usefulness to human beings.

Stimulating nature connection amongst children is essential for the sustainability of our planet and its wellbeing. As educators, we can facilitate children’s encounter with nature, guiding them into the natural world and supporting their flourishing experiences. These practices originate from traditional indigenous knowledge and are not lessons or activities, but learning habits. They create a dynamic awareness of nature. The multitude of practices form a coherent behaviour with the natural world and within the society, however, these learning experiences are deep, multi-layered and complex.

The Sit Spot method

The most common practice that triggers nature connection is developing a strong relationship with a wild place. Returning to the same place in the natural world can create a kindred spirit and deep bond with nature. This practice is known as a Sit Spot. Just by being present, still and observant, the lessons of nature will seep in. With time, children are able to observe the changes on the environment, collect stories and experience different emotions with that surrounding. During this experience one can develop a strong personal relationship with the natural world.

The Sit Spot is an experience of privacy and intimacy with nature. At home or in classrooms we must engage in deep listening. This is an essential part of the Sit Spot, bringing the natural world into our houses and public life. Witnessed by the collective, children can express their stories of the natural world. This practice takes work and requires a safe circle for conversation. It cannot be squeezed between morning snack and lunch time. Storytelling weaves the community together. Children can experience their colleague’s emotions and have their feelings acknowledged. Through storytelling one can find an inner and outer connection with the land and place.

Nature connection develops a sense of belonging to the Earth and the human community. Experiences may vary widely across countries, but we can all support children and empower them to develop their ecological Self and become stewards of the Earth.

Maria Eduarda Souza is a social ecologist and educator at Traidhos Three Generation Barge Program. http://mariaeduardasouza.com Special thanks to Yulli Nakamura, photographer and friend who contributed images. http://yullinakamura.com
New-look healthy Boarding Bites

Food snacks at Prem have entered a wholesome phase, as Sintra Burgess found when she explored the new healthy options available at Boarding Bites.

Boarding Bites at Prem has re-launched itself with a new mission statement. It aims to provide a sustainable café and shop for the boarding community, which promotes healthy options and creates minimal waste. Any profits from Boarding Bites will go to a sustainable themed charity.

The shelves of the freshly decorated Boarding Bites are stocked with healthier alternatives to the traditional snacks, such as crisps and sugary drinks, that were once on sale.

As part of their strategy to stock healthier products, student organisers have collaborated with Rawsome House to offer raw snacks for sale. These fresh raw treats include watermelon juice, banana rolls, chocolate and berry ice-cream.

To promote the re-launch of Boarding Bites, the team went door-to-door selling ice cream and homemade granola mixes to Prem boarders, which proved popular.

The next stage of the project involves the Boarding Bites team experimenting with different recipes to find a selection of snacks they can make themselves. Their experimentation will include on and off-campus food workshops.

Already the team are considering special events, which will focus on different foods, such as national dishes, Taco Tuesdays and Wholemeal Muffin Wednesday.

The Boarding Bites team also plan to expand opening times for the shop to include after school hours service.

As part of the sustainability drive, the team will select stock that has minimal packaging. To achieve this, they are looking at different suppliers and trying to source snacks locally.

It's an exciting project and worth the extra effort, as the team play an important role in modelling how to live a healthier with a more ecologically sustainable lifestyle.

Watch out for the opening times and please come and try the new healthier products at Boarding Bites.

Sintra Burgess is a boarding parent who has been supporting the Boarding Bites team.
Tracing the evolution of yoga in Western culture, yoga education specialist, Borys Maciburko, reveals how a group of teachers are enabling yoga to be accessible to all, no matter their age or physical ability.

In 1985 I attended my very first yoga class in Adelaide, Australia. It was to be the beginning of a thirty-two-year journey into the world of yoga. A journey that led to studying yoga in six countries, across three continents, and completing classical yoga teacher-training in the birthplace of yoga - India.

Yoga in the 1980s was an esoteric pursuit, practiced mainly by an alternative, sub-culture minority. In the 1990s, yoga’s popularity in western culture began to explode exponentially. Today it is a seventeen billion dollar per annum industry that sells yoga as a premium lifestyle. And wherever there is money, there is always big business. The majority of yoga teachers, however, struggle to make a living. Many teach yoga only as a hobby or a part-time pursuit. So where does all the money go?

Most of the money in the yoga industry is in clothing and yoga accessories. And not surprisingly, whenever clothing is involved, the image of the idealised perfect human body comes in to assist with the marketing. Almost every cover of Yoga Journal over the past twenty years has presented an image of a near-perfect body in a near-impossible yoga pose. Within its pages, the magazine is full of advertisements for sexy yoga clothing.

Yoga purists believe that yoga has been hijacked. The original purpose of yoga has been usurped for the purposes of materialistic gain in the guise of the inherently flawed pursuit of the perfect body.

The origins of yoga

Yoga originated in India some 2500 years ago. The very first writings about yoga were a series of aphorisms compiled by a legendary sage called Patanjali who lived in India in the fourth century BCE. The aphorisms became known as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and form the foundation of classical yoga. Patanjali’s definition of yoga in the original Sanskrit is “Yoga chitta vritti nirodah”. The most common translation of this sutra is that “yoga is a method of quieting the mind” – a system of practices that can lead to mental peace.

However, yoga masters from the sixth century AD onwards identified shortcomings with the Patanjali’s preoccupation with the mind and began developing a system of practices that focused on purifying and strengthening the body. Details of asanas were developed and recorded in what
became known as the Hatha Yoga Texts. The culminating work of Hatha Yoga was written several centuries later in the fifteenth century. It is called the Hatha Yoga Pradipika and it has become the predominant manual from which modern yoga is based. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika describes details about postures, breathing techniques and cleansing techniques designed to purify the body first in preparation for meditation afterwards. Ironically their end objective, nonetheless, was to prepare the body for meditation. Whist yoga can and does strengthen the physical body, this is a side-effect of its primary purpose – that of quieting the mind. In the beginning yoga was an esoteric pursuit steeped in contemplation and mysticism. Today it is sold as a premium lifestyle fixated on health and fitness.

Western culture's narrow focus

The current western preoccupation with solely the physical component of yoga has both risks and rewards. Numerous medical studies have shown that yoga can reduce stress and lower heart rate and blood pressure to boost immunity and prevent disease. However, with the rewards come certain risks.

Yoga’s exploding popularity has led to an abundance of studios where many teachers lack the deeper training necessary to recognize when students are headed toward injury. Ironically, the biggest growth market in yoga at present is seniors and men. Unfortunately, the rate of injury from yoga is increasing and seniors are getting injured at an alarming rate.

In addition, modern yoga’s preoccupation with the body beautiful has marginalized those who do not fit into this fictitious ideal. For years seniors, ‘plus-sized’ people and those with disabilities have felt that they did not have access to the benefits of yoga. However, a quiet revolution is taking place to bring the teachings and benefits of yoga to a broader audience in a safe, intelligent and injury-free way.

Returning to the essence

Jivana Heyman, a yoga teacher from San Francisco, is the founding director of "Accessible Yoga" - an organization dedicated to sharing the benefits of Yoga with anyone who currently does not have access to these practices. Accessible Yoga is not a new style or a school of yoga, but a body of teachers who have been trained to adapt and adjust the classical yoga poses in safe ways and make them accessible to all people regardless of physical ability, shape, size or level of experience.

Accessible yoga is particularly suitable for seniors. And seniors are poised to become a major demographic group in the yoga world. People are living longer now than ever before and by 2030, twenty per cent of the population will be over sixty-five.

Yoga for seniors is a specialised field requiring specialised training for teachers. Unfortunately, physiological changes are inevitable as the body ages. Muscle mass decreases and connective tissue stiffens. Bones become more brittle and joints become inflamed. Lung function decreases, blood pressure and blood sugar increases. In short, with age comes a decline of physiological reserve and a disruption...
of homeostasis – the body’s ability to maintain balance.

Chronological age, however, is not an accurate predictor of physical condition and many of the effects of aging are associated with physical inactivity.

The CDC’s (Centre for Disease Control) exercise recommendations for older adults are one hundred and fifty minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity and muscle–strengthening activities on two or more days a week. Two seventy-five-minute yoga classes would cover the CDC’s recommendation.

In addition, an increasing number of medical studies have shown that yoga can:

- Reduce stress
- Improve breathing capacity
- Improve balance and posture
- Assist in keeping muscles and connective tissues supple
- Reduce the pain of arthritis
- Decrease blood pressure
- Decrease blood sugar levels
- Increase immunity

### Improving wellness

According to Harvard Health, “the evidence is growing that yoga practice is a relatively low-risk, high yield approach to improving overall health.” However, walking into a yoga class full of fit thirty-year olds in tight yoga pants can be intimidating for seniors as well as younger people who think they may not have the ideal body.

Accessible Yoga aims to change this. Accessible Yoga’s mission is to make yoga more accessible and inclusive, regardless of a person’s gender, age, current level of flexibility or fitness. In an Accessible Yoga class everyone is welcome to join. Each student is invited to participate in all practices and variations are offered at many levels. The focus is on the original essence of yoga – connecting with inner peace.
Keeping active, while at the same time providing a community service, is a recipe for physical and mental wellbeing. This is one of the principles behind the summer vacation community service projects at Traidhos Three-Generation Community for Learning, Visiting Schools Programme.

Travel for Teens community service projects have achieved significant and positive outcomes for hill-tribe communities of northern Thailand in recent years. In 2016 Travel for Teens added to the wellbeing of twenty-four hill-tribe girls with the construction of a girls’ dormitory.

Following last year’s success, the summer vacation Travel for Teens community service project added another building to the hill-tribe village - a five by twelve-metre canteen.

The canteen project was no easy task. It started with the first Travel for Teens group filling the sixty square-metre floor with four inches of dirt. This involved a lot of digging, but with the help of the local dormitory students, the job was finished in a day.

Cooperation and collaboration enabled students to work as a team and to bond with one another. Being part of a team meant students supported each other, and as a result, they didn’t seem to mind the hard labour, especially those who had just arrived from overseas. Members of this group included three boys and seven girls from Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Canada and America.

On the second and third days, students learnt how to build and render the canteen walls. Even though it rained constantly, the project continued on schedule. The rain turned out to be welcome relief from the heat, as it cooled down the work area.

Travel for Teens students were assisted by local hill-tribe children who were excited to be involved in the building effort. They helped to fill the floor with dirt and to build the walls. It was the first time the children had experienced building something this large and they were excited that their effort went to such a worthy cause.
The second group takes over

Travel for Teens community service projects support two groups a year for the summer vacation. This year the second group consisted of one boy and ten girls from America.

This group was tasked with continuing the canteen project; building on the foundation laid by the first group. Their job was to cement the floor, which was designed to be three to four inches thick - a lot of cement!

Mixing cement is hard manual labour. The team was required to mix the powdered cement with sand and stone. Despite the heat and the difficult job, students continued to work throughout the day. Staff had to remind the keen workers to take a break and to rotate the cement mixing task.

The floor took three days of challenging work, involving the continuous mixing and pouring of cement. On the last day, the team wrote their group name with rocks in the wet cement.

It was an excellent team effort and everyone felt proud that they had finish the project on time. To celebrate, students put aside their exhaustion to try some adventure activity.

The canteen cost around 100,000 baht to build. Money was raised by both groups before travelling to Thailand to work on the project.

This is wonderful example of how teamwork can bring a sense of wellbeing to volunteers and the community.

The canteen project is another successful community service project for Travel for Teens and plans are underway for more community building next year.

Robert Awiwong works as Safety Officer for Visiting Schools Program. He was the project manager for the hill-tribe community service project.
Plain water the source of life

The secret to maintaining good skin and a healthy body involves one very important daily routine. Wellness Specialist, Judith Coulson-Geissman examines how we can improve wellbeing through rehydration.

Adequate water intake is important for both children and adults. The human body consists predominantly of water, making water a crucial substance that enables cells, organs, and tissues to work properly. This includes the brain.

The body of an average adult is 57 - 60 per cent water, while infants consist of 75 - 78 per cent water, dropping to 65 per cent by one year of age.

We lose water all the time through urination, every time we exhale, and through the skin. It is important for our physical and emotional wellbeing that we replenish water and avoid dehydration, especially in a hot climate like in Thailand.

Infants should consume 1.5 ounces of water per pound of body weight. Children four to seven years old, about 1 litre per day. Children seven to ten years old, about 1.5 litres. Children ten years plus, up to 2 litres, or 8-10 large glasses a day.

Let’s now look at some benefits of drinking the right amount of water.

Drinking water keeps you young

Drinking plenty of water is great for your skin. If you don’t drink enough water, you’ll suffer from dry skin and will likely use more creams and lotions to moisturize. However, creams and lotions don’t strike at the root of the problem. Drinking plenty of water keeps your skin moisturized and reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

If you don’t drink enough water, your body will try to retain it in order to conserve resources. This retention makes your skin puffy and can even lead to bloating.

Drinking water helps you lose weight

There’s a reason why most diets and fitness programs ask you to drink a lot of water. One of the benefits of drinking water is that it helps you lose weight.

Water suppresses your appetite, so you don’t eat as much. Drinking plenty of water also prevents fluid retention, because your body won’t try to retain water if it’s getting enough.

Drinking water also helps your body burn stored fat. If you’re not drinking enough water, your liver will be forced to help your kidneys detoxify your body. When you drink plenty of water, your kidneys don’t need any extra help, so your liver will be able to metabolize stored fat more efficiently. Drinking water flushes toxins from your body and prevents constipation.

Drinking water helps you build muscle

Another benefit of drinking water is that it makes your muscles stronger. That’s because water carries oxygen to the cells of your body, including those of your muscles. Drinking plenty of water enables your muscles to work harder and longer before they feel tired, and this can help you build muscle.

Drinking water makes you smarter

Drinking water can increase your cognitive function. Your brain needs a lot of oxygen to function at optimum levels. Drinking plenty of water ensures that your brain gets all the oxygen it needs. Drinking eight to ten cups of water per day can improve your levels of cognitive performance by as much as thirty per cent.

Drinking plenty of water also supports nerve function. It ensures that your body’s electrolyte levels remain high enough to allow your nerves to relay messages to and from the brain in the way they were meant to.

Drinking water is good for your joints

One of the lesser known benefits of drinking water is that it helps keep your joints strong, healthy and lubricated. Your joints need moisture to remain strong and flexible, so that your movements are smooth and pain free.

Water and dehydration

Water regulates and controls the natural pH balance of the body, is revitalizing, hydrating, oxygenating and detoxifying.
Preventing dehydration

People living or working in hot climates, taking part in sports or other strenuous physical activities, spending eight or more hours in air-conditioned rooms, or who are recovering from illness, should increase their fluid intake to at least 10 - 12 glasses.

High coffee, fruit juice or soft drink consumption, as well as a diet high in sodium and sugar, can lead to dehydration.

After years of coaching parents and working with children, many cases of hyperactivity, lack of concentration and focus, headaches, migraines, as well as other chronic pains, could be prevented and reduced if children and adults would drink enough plain water and avoid dehydration.

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Symptoms of dehydration:
- Increased thirst or hunger
- Dry mouth and swollen tongue
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Palpitations (feeling that the heart is jumping or pounding)
- Confusion
- Sluggishness, fainting
- Inability to sweat
- Decreased urine output (urine is dark yellow to brown)
How we see ourselves, other people and the world around us affects our mental health and wellbeing. Exploring the power of thought in building strength and resilience, the words of Anne Frank come to mind - “Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy”.

Consider for a moment you have everything you wish; love, comfort, health and happiness. These elements describe a state of wellbeing. Each element is attainable if we change one simple thing – the way we think. Thought patterns can hold us back, affect our relationships, and aid or hinder resilience in the face of life’s challenges. One of the first steps on the journey to wellbeing is to take control of our thoughts.

In ‘The Power Is Within You’ (1991) Louise Hay says; it’s not your mind that is in control, you are in control of your mind. When old negative thoughts come flooding in, it is up to you to shift these thoughts; “the point of power is always the present moment”.

Most of us have experienced negative inner dialogue. Negative thoughts can be triggered by a situation, verbal exchange, or from being the target of repetitive aggressive or undermining behaviour. The present moment is when you have the greatest power to change this inner dialogue, by changing the way you think. You can either take on someone else’s negativity, or you can remain in the present and reflect the positive. If you allow outside influences to affect your mind, you become the victim.

“You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realise this and you will find strength.” Amrcus Aurelius

The power is within you

No matter your age or your environment, negative energy of those around you can pull you down and result in poor health. This is where problem solving and decision making enters the ‘power within’ process.

It’s your choice whether to absorb the negativity and withdraw into yourself, or to consciously recognise the damaging situation and remove yourself physically and mentally.

If the negativity continues and becomes destructive to you, then you may be in a control/bullying situation. It’s time to put your mind to work and to examine why this person is behaving this way. More enquiry may reveal a deeper truth behind this behaviour. If nothing changes, you become the victim of the situation and will enter a vicious cycle where you give away your power to fuel the power and ego of the other party.

Once you externalise the situation you are on the road to solving the problem, for if you are no longer the victim, the aggressor or bully has no target.
Seeing the world differently

Frenemies is a term used by Karen Clarke in her book ‘Bullied to Brilliant’ (2015). Frenemies are people who see the worst in everything and overall feel the world is a hostile place. This outlook can start at an early age. They are people who appear to be your friend or ally, but secretly are jealous, distrustful and negative. Bear in mind, this attitude may be temporary, as people have the capacity to change – a friend today could become your enemy tomorrow; your frenemy could become a loyal friend in the future.

Frenemies can be found at work, home or school and can be one of the most demoralising and difficult forms of bullying. If you find yourself in this situation, Clarke recommends staying mindful, so as not to adopt a false and negative sense of yourself by believing what is said. One strategy in managing this type of negative situation is to limit your interactions with this type of person. By removing yourself, you are protecting your mental and physical wellbeing.

Elixir of the mind

Rising above the negativity, being kind and generous of spirit, and believing in yourself is medicine for the mind. “Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure. Confidence is the greatest friend. Non-being is the greatest joy” Lao Tzu

Understanding your self-worth, creativity and connection to the world, together with displaying enthusiasm and joy for the moment, is perceived by others as someone who is confident. Clarke (2015) believes that when our outward expression matches our innermost desires, we can truly say we have found deep contentment and happiness.

Outward confidence should be supported and encouraged, even though at times it may be misinterpreted, such as a cheeky child. However, there is a distinction between someone who has confidence and someone who is attention-seeking and dominant.

Inner confidence is different from outer confidence. It is the magical essence that radiates from a person. Inner confidence comes from believing in yourself, your life purpose, and the truth of living it. These people have certainty and purpose about all they do, and embrace life’s challenges. They learn from their mistakes, they accept responsibility for their actions and existence, and they carry forward life’s lessons on their individual journey.

“Show me someone who is humble enough to accept and take responsibility for his or her circumstance and courageous enough to take whatever initiative is necessary to creatively work his or her way through and around these challenges, and I’ll show you the supreme power of choice.” Steve Covey

Power of the mind

Wellness of the mind is essential to life. Stress, bullying, emotional blackmail and controlling are elements external to the self. One way to end a negative thought or bullying cycle, is to take control of your thoughts, which breaks the pattern. Practicing positive affirmations, yoga and meditation, can help control your thought processes. Another way is to remove yourself from the line of fire.

For each of us, the wish for love, comfort, health and happiness is attainable if we use the power of thought to change old patterns and create a new journey.

“To bring anything into your life, imagine it’s already there” Richard Bach

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Steps to positive thinking

“Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habit. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.” Lao Tzu

Each of us has a set of messages that play over and over in our minds. This internal dialogue, or personal commentary, influences our words, actions, habits, relationships and ultimately, in the words of Lao Tzu, the destiny of our lives.

Too often the pattern of self-talk we’ve developed is negative. This internal seed of negativity causes a dark ripple that extends to all corners of our daily lives. We walk around with a dark cloud hovering close-by, and view all glasses as half-empty. Our conversations always revert to all that is wrong with the world, and we’re constantly expecting the worst.

This negative approach to life can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Concepts such as the law of attraction, “you reap what you sow,” and “birds of a feather flock together,” speak to the magnetic power of our thoughts. Many studies confirm the correlation between positive thinking and success. So how can we begin to brighten our view of the world, and infuse more positivity into our thought patterns? Although quite simple, these six steps can make a profound impact on your approach to life, and ultimately create a more positive outcome.

Practice gratitude

One of the quickest ways to shift your focus away from negativity, judgment, and disappointment is to list the things in your life for which you are grateful. Be grateful to be gainfully employed, to sleep in a bed each night, for the sun that comes up each morning, for the waiter who greets you with a smile, for the people that love and care for you, and for a body that lets you experience life each day. Practicing gratefulness can cause almost an immediate shift in your perspective. Keep a daily gratitude journal.

Two steps forward

Initially, it might be hard to stop the negative flow of thoughts. This shift takes time. Be patient with yourself, and first just try to observe your thought patterns. See if you can catch yourself judging others, focusing on failures, complaining about work, or criticising yourself or your body. When you observe these thoughts, take a moment to counter each negative thought with two positive observations. Think of it as two steps forward, one step back.

Positive Posture

The mind and the body have an intrinsic connection—each has a profound impact on the other. If you are struggling to move your mind into a more positive perspective, try moving your body there first. Try standing up straight, shoulders back, chin held high, stretching your arms out as wide as they can go. Feel powerful. Feel positive.

Smile

Another way for your body to “trick” your mind into being more positive is through smiling. The simple act of smiling, even if you don’t necessarily have anything to smile about, can instantly change the way you feel internally. Whether you are sitting at your desk, driving in your car, or walking down the street, smile. You will be amazed how your mind reacts.

Ditch the crabs

If you put a crab in a bucket, it will easily climb out. But if you put a second crab in the bucket, neither of them will escape. Once one starts to escape, the other will pull it back down into the bucket. In other words, surround yourself with positive people.

Do something kind

It’s easy to get absorbed by our own world of misfortune and to forget about the people around us. Stepping outside of your daily routine to help someone else can provide amazing perspective and fill you with positivity. Strive to do one nice thing for someone else each day.

Extract from: Gregory L. Jantz, PhD is the founder of ‘The Center - A Place of HOPE’ and an internationally recognized best-selling author of twenty eight books related to mental wellness and holistic recovery treatment. [sourced: www.psychologytoday.com]
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