

Culture COUNTS

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Fall is the perfect time to build resilience and practice mindfulness

A recent article in The New York Times talks about the bittersweet nature of fall. As the weather grows colder and days become shorter, people often feel a sense of loss for the easier days of summer despite the joys of the season. Simply put, fall can be a catalyst for the discomfort that comes with change.

“Psychologists have found that the thought of change, the ending of one thing, the beginning of another and yes, perhaps our own mortality, underlies a great deal of anxiety,” the article, written by wellness writer Erik Vance, says. “Some of us struggle with the ‘intolerance of uncertainty,’ as experts call it, more than others.”

To help, some experts suggest leaning into your uncertainty to

build resilience. For example, if you rely on routines and planning to feel more in control of your life, try setting out during one of these quickly-darkening nights to do some stargazing. Go for a walk in a new neighborhood on a day it might rain.

“You might get lost, or soaked or unable to see stars,” says Dr. Kelly Wilson, a psychology professor at the University of Mississippi. “You might feel like you’re uncomfortable, or wasting your time. But those small amounts of uncertainty will build exposure to, a tolerance toward and even an appreciation of times when you don’t know what’s ahead and feel out of control.”

Similarly, mindfulness is another strategy to ease seasonal

“IF THE LEAVES ARE
CHANGING, I FEEL
POETRY IN THE AIR.”

— LAURA JAWORSKI

anxiety. Just step back and observe the world around you. Watch the colors change, the leaves fall. Be in the moment and appreciate your senses.

“If you’re always trying to avoid difficult feelings, you might end up cutting yourself off from love and richness and sweetness,” says Dr. Wilson. “This is how life is: sweet and sad, poured from the same vessel in equal measure.”



Creating a welcoming and affirming environment for students

About 45 high school students in the Crossroads program at Crown Road Campus were hoisted high into the trees this fall during a field trip to Orenda Springs, an experiential learning facility in Marcellus. The adventure was part of a Student Services mission to create “a welcoming and affirming environment” for students through Project Based Learning. See more photos and a story on Page 6.

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WELLNESS COUNTS

Five Fall Fitness Tips to Help You Stay on Track

Source: <https://fitonapp.com/fitness/fall-fitness-tips/>

Contrary to popular belief, January 1 isn't the only time to kick off (or reset) a health routine! In fact, it's one of the tougher times.

A more fun (and sustainable) approach? Give yourself — and your goals — a quarterly reboot. It allows you to check in more frequently with yourself, your body, your mindset, your routine... the works! With the beginning of each new season, we have an opportunity to start fresh all over again. It allows us to revisit our “why” and what we want out of our lives and our health.

And while Fall isn't always seen as the ‘fresh new energy’ kind of season, it also happens to be the back-to-school season, and you don't have to be a kid to harness that energy!

Ahead, five tips to make the most of this delightful, colorful season — and keep yourself on track toward your goals.

#1 START FRESH

As we mentioned, use this ‘launching’ energy of a new season to kick off a new era for your health routine and stay on track with your fall fitness. If you've already got a good thing going, GREAT! Is there anything you want to tweak, change, or add on? This is the perfect time to take inventory.

And if you took some time off during the summer or have just felt off your game, that's ok! Wherever you're at is perfect. Without judgment, let's kick off a fresh chapter and a new (or restarted) routine.

If you need some motivation to get started, you could set Halloween as a memorable start date!

#2 SET GOALS

- Why is a health and wellness routine important to you?
- What are your health goals, and why are those your goals?
- What makes them important, and how do they positively impact your life?
- What are some accomplishments you're proud of and goals you've achieved in the past season or past year?
- What are some things you'd like to see changed?
- Imagine the healthiest, best version of yourself... What does that person do every day? What's their routine like? How do they feel?
- What steps are you going to take this season to become that version of yourself?

Any of these prompts can be used in a journal or as tools to create whatever game plan works best for your brain (even if it's just thinking about it).

Refocusing and getting clear on what's important to you this season will help you stay sharp and on track with your fall fitness goals.





WELLNESS COUNTS

#3 START A PROGRAM OR COURSE

Don't go it alone! You don't have to design your own routine or regimen, especially not here! Perfectly timed with this back-to-school season, there are courses and programs on many health fitness apps to guide you through your fitness, nutrition, and overall wellness journey. Think of it like having a coach in the palm of your hand! Take the stress out of the equation, and don't worry about designing a program for yourself... they exist already! Now get excited to jump into something new.

#4 TAP INTO SEASONAL FLAVORS & ACTIVITIES

Pumpkin spice lattes and leaf peeping aren't the only things to get excited about in autumn. Think about your favorite seasonal, healthy foods, including produce (hello, butternut squash, and fresh, crisp apples!). With the new season comes new cuisine, flavors, spices, and colorful finds at the farmer's market.

Then, of course, there's your activity roster. Since the temps are cooling off, it might be a more comfortable time to go for a walk or run outside without overheating and sweating through your clothes, eh? Give some seasonal workouts a try! Maybe you've swapped summertime swimming for autumnal hikes or rock climbing. List out — mentally or on paper — all the things you're excited about this season, and then work that into your healthy routine.

#5 LISTEN TO YOUR BODY'S SEASON, TOO

Just like the environment here on earth goes through seasonal changes, your body does too. What worked for you in spring and summer might not work for you in the fall... and that's OK! Don't force it! Tuning into the seasons (and your body) and switching it up can actually be a healthy thing. So, no judgment!

Depending on your body, the stage of life you're in, what you've got going on, etc., this might be a slower season for you... you could find yourself gravitating toward yoga, gentle stretching, maybe some Pilates. Forcing yourself to do it at a time in which your body is asking for softness is a surefire way to not stay on track, so try to tune in as best you can to your personal needs.

Conversely, if you spent the past several months taking it easy, perhaps this is the time you want to try something different, something more energizing and challenging, like kickboxing or weightlifting.

The key, regardless of the specifics here, is to tune into your body, your mind, and your needs. What feels good? What are you feeling called toward? What doesn't feel good, and what do you want to avoid? This is a powerful tool when used correctly!



WELLNESS COUNTS

Recipe: Sweet Potato Salad

By Love & Lemons

Salads are great all year long, but fall salads can be especially scrumptious. We move away from juicy summer bounty towards sweeter, starchier veggies like sweet potatoes and squash. And after a few months of craving leafless salads filled with tomatoes and corn, nothing tastes better than a bowl of fall greens like spinach, arugula, or kale.

Together, these fresh greens and hearty autumn veggies create salads that are light and healthy, but satisfying, too. In this roasted sweet potato salad recipe, some favorite fall ingredients come together in one place. It boasts arugula, feta cheese, pepitas, avocado, tahini dressing, and roasted sweet potatoes. The tangy feta contrasts with the caramelized sweet potatoes, while the creamy avocado plays off the crunchy pepitas. The arugula makes the whole thing light and fresh, and the bright tahini dressing ties it all together. If this sweet potato salad isn't an ideal fall lunch, nothing is!



INGREDIENTS

A few basic ingredients fill this sweet potato salad recipe with delicious texture and flavor:

- **Sweet potatoes (2 potatoes, cut in cubes)**, of course! I roast them until they're caramelized on the outside and tender in the middle. You only need a handful of ingredients to make oven roasted sweet potatoes:
- **Arugula (4 cups)** – I'm obsessed with these soft bitter greens! If you don't have arugula on hand, spinach, massaged kale, or baby lettuces would be great here too.
- **Avocado (1 sliced)** – It adds creamy richness to this hearty sweet potato salad.
- **Pepitas (3 tablespoons)** – For crunch!
- **Feta cheese (1/3 cup)** – I love how its tangy flavor plays off the caramelized sweet potatoes. If you're vegan, skip the cheese entirely, or replace it with a few pickled red onions for pop.
- **Tahini dressing** – This bright, nutty dressing ties it all together! It's a simple mix of tahini, lemon juice, maple syrup, olive oil, sesame oil, garlic, water, and salt.

To make this recipe, roast the sweet potatoes and whisk together the dressing. Then, assemble the salad in a large bowl or platter with the arugula, roasted sweet potatoes, avocado, pepitas, and feta cheese. Drizzle on the dressing, and enjoy!

HOW TO ROAST SWEET POTATOES

Chop the potatoes, cutting all the pieces to a similar size so that they cook evenly in the oven. I recommend leaving the sweet potato skin on. It's full of nutrients, and it helps the cubes crisp up as they bake! Spread the cubed potatoes on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Drizzle them with olive oil, season them with salt and pepper and toss! Your goal is to coat the potatoes evenly in the oil, salt, and pepper.

Arrange the cubes on the baking sheet with a little space between each one. Don't skip this step! If the potatoes are too crowded, they'll steam in the oven, and they won't get crisp and browned around the edges.

Transfer the baking sheet to a 425° oven. Roast for about 25 minutes, until the potatoes are browning around the edges. The exact cooking time will vary depending on the size of your cubes and the freshness of your potatoes. Enjoy!

TIPS & VARIATIONS

To keep the arugula from wilting, let the sweet potatoes cool before you toss everything together.

Store the dressing and avocado separately until you eat. If you add the dressing too early, the salad will get soggy. Similarly, if you cut the avocado too far ahead of time, it'll turn brown and bitter.

CULTURE COUNTS

Nurturing Relationships

By Randi Downs

It has been an extraordinary couple of years for staff and students all over the world, and this year, as our school year begins, we are aware that there will be so much to do as we welcome and support all of our students.

It has been inspiring to see how the educators and staff at OCM BOCES have been committed to nurturing relationships with students. It's pretty easy to connect with your students throughout the day and it doesn't require a ton of time.

While Restorative Practices is about the many ways we build relationships with kids, using circles with our learners can be a powerful place to start.

Here are some ideas that our Restorative Practice turnkey staff has been sharing:

- Check-in circles
- Check-out circles
- Content circles
- Problem-solving circles
- Academic goal-setting circles
- Community-building circles
- Welcome back circles
- Welcoming a new student circles
- Vocabulary circles

Feel free to try one or two of them. Don't get discouraged if they don't go as planned. Sometimes we need to try things a bunch of times before we see any progress. If you need extra support, [here is a list of people who can help](#). Please reach out to them if you require more information or support. The most important thing is to keep at it. It will be all worth it in the end and your students will thank you.

Building a relationship with students is by far the most important thing a teacher can do. Without a solid foundation and relationships built on trust and respect, no quality learning can happen.

- Timothy Hilton in Education Week Teacher



Crown Road Reach program for grades 7-8

CULTURE COUNTS

Crossroads Soaring High

By Jackie Wiegand

Alex Spears is scared of heights. Sage Hamilton loves them. Both seniors were hoisted into the trees by their classmates during a recent field trip to the Orenda Springs Experiential Learning Center in Marcellus. Activities included being lifted straight up, swinging through the trees like a pendulum, hovering on ropes over the heads of their teachers, and climbing into a suspended net in the woods with the entire class. As students cheered and laughed and encouraged each other, Crossroads Principal Maggie Daniels said the adventurous outing was a great way to build rapport. Later, at the end of the week, Crossroads students, staff and invited guests gathered for a “gallery walk” that included an “All About Me Gazette” for each student, a photojournalism display of the Orenda trip, and more. Said Spears: “I have a fear of heights, but once I was up there, I was fine. I liked it, to be honest.”

