

# In Sound Health

## HOW PURSUING YOUR PASSIONS CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

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Smartphone Use





# TURN OVER A NEW LEAF THIS FALL

September 2023

As the leaves start falling from the trees, it's the perfect time to enjoy the fall colors, get cozy indoors, and review your health and wellness goals ahead of the new year. Make the most of the season by doing things you love and building healthy habits to support your mental and physical health.

In this issue of *In Sound Health* we delve into the mental and physical health benefits of pursuing your passions. We also share tools and tips for caring for aging parents and provide information about how to take care of yourself through Health Coaching. We have a delicious low-carb spinach and artichoke stuffed spaghetti squash recipe that's packed with calcium and fiber - plus, tips for developing mindful smartphone habits. As always, if you are looking to make a change in your health, Sound Support programs are here for you.

IN THE NEWS

## HOW PURSUING YOUR PASSIONS CAN IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH



When life gets busy, you may notice you focus less on doing the things you love and more on pressing priorities, like work or school. It can be hard to find time to pursue hobbies. However, dedicating time to doing the things that bring you joy can have a massive impact on your mental and physical well-being. Your hobby can be anything that makes you happy. No matter what you love to do, hobbies can make you a healthier, happier person.

### What Counts as a Hobby?

A hobby is any activity that you frequently do for pleasure during your leisure time. Hobbies can include creative, athletic, and intellectual activities.

### HEALTH BENEFITS OF HOBBIES

Taking time to do activities that make you happy can improve your mental health, professional performance, and creative problem-solving abilities — it can even help you build better relationships and become more empathetic! A regular hobby can help:



**Improve Overall Well Being:** Studies show that people who participate in activities that make them happy are less likely to feel low or depressed. Hobbies can make you happier and more relaxed, leading to an increased sense of well-being.



**Reduce Stress:** Spending your free time engaged in activities that make you happy lowers your stress levels. Research has found that taking time to practice relaxing and engaging in enjoyable hobbies can cause a noticeable decrease in cortisol levels.



**Support Mental Health:** Practicing any kind of hobby can lead to improved mental health. Hobbies that involve physical activity can lead to lower blood pressure, and better focus. Meanwhile, intellectually rewarding activities, like learning a new skill, can help improve brain activity and increase confidence.



**Improve Relationships:** Participating in activities you enjoy with like-minded people, such as team sports or volunteering, can help enhance your communication skills and build connections with others. Doing hobbies in a group can help you overcome feelings of loneliness — which impacts your physical, and mental health.



## YOU CALL THE SHOTS!

Flu season is just around the corner, and experts are predicting another “triple epidemic” with flu, COVID-19 and RSV circulating this winter. Getting a flu shot is the single best way to protect against the flu. And while you’re getting your flu shot, check to see if you are eligible for a COVID-19 booster. Eligible plan participants and their covered dependents can receive \$0 co-pay flu shots and COVID-19 vaccines, with coverage subject to plan limitations.

Plus, you and your eligible spouse can earn up to \$200 in funding for your 2024 HRA\* by getting a covered flu shot, up to \$200 for the COVID-19 vaccine and up to \$100 for a COVID booster by December 31, 2023!

Talk to your health care provider about what immunizations are right for you. Vaccines are recommended for adults based on age, health conditions, job, and other related factors.



Visit [soundhealthwellness.com/flushot/](https://soundhealthwellness.com/flushot/) to learn more.

*\*Final earned amount depends on the other Health Related Actions you perform this year. **Must be HRA eligible on January 1, 2024.***

## HOW TO MAKE TIME FOR HOBBIES

- **Schedule in Advance:** Find gaps in your schedule where you can spend time on your hobbies. Start out by allocating, in advance, a few hours every week or month to do activities you enjoy.
- **Take Breaks:** Taking multiple short breaks during your day can improve your productivity while allowing you time to indulge in activities you enjoy, like reading a book, gardening, or listening to a podcast.
- **Limit Time Wasters:** Protect your leisure hours by paying attention to how you spend your time. Try reducing your passive activities, like spending time on social media or watching tv, and use your extra time for more active pursuits you find fulfilling!

Remember that hobbies should be things you choose to spend your free time doing, not another task on your to-do list. While it’s important to make time for the things you love to do, you don’t need to dedicate countless hours of your week on something to see its benefits.

Having a hobby that makes you excited can help boost your quality of life and improve your health. If you feel you don’t have anything you’re particularly passionate about, you probably just haven’t discovered it yet! Get started by thinking about things you loved doing as a kid, something you’ve always wanted to try, or something you used to love that you’ve stopped doing. Browse the internet or your local newspaper for activities that spark your interest. And most of all, have fun!



Sources: [hbr.org](https://hbr.org), [psychologytoday.com](https://psychologytoday.com), [webmd.com](https://webmd.com)

# CONFIDENTLY CARING FOR AN ELDERLY PARENT

As parents grow older, adult children often find themselves taking on the role of caregivers, facing a multitude of decisions and responsibilities. Whether your elderly parents live with you, in their own home, or in a retirement community, the challenges of caring for aging loved ones can be overwhelming.

You can ease the burden and stress of taking care of your loved ones, and yourself by planning ahead with the help of resources and support from others.



## RELIEVE UNCERTAINTY WITH A CARE PLAN

It may be uncomfortable to talk with a parent about aging, but working with them to create a Senior Care Plan is a good first step in ensuring they receive the support they need. Admitting when it is time to get help can be hard, and many seniors wait until something becomes a crisis before they finally reach out. You can help them—and yourself—by starting the conversation. Senior care plans address various components:



1. **Creating a Safer Home Environment:** To promote independent living and reduce the risk of injuries, make necessary modifications to their living space. Installing grab bars, ramps, and adequate lighting can significantly enhance their safety.
2. **Financial Planning:** Assess your parents' financial status, including savings, Social Security benefits, and any existing insurance coverage. Consider consulting a financial advisor to ensure their long-term care needs are accounted for.
3. **Legal Documentation:** Ensure your parents have essential legal documents in place, such as wills, trusts, power of attorney, and advanced medical directives. Consulting an elder law attorney can help navigate these complex matters.
4. **Caregiving Options:** Explore different caregiving arrangements, such as in-home care, assisted living, memory care, nursing homes, or senior living communities. Each option comes with its own benefits and considerations.
5. **Health Insurance:** Understand your parents' health insurance coverage, including any long-term care insurance. Explore available options for senior healthcare and elder care.
6. **Respite Care:** Plan for respite care to give yourself and other family members a break from caregiving duties, ensuring you maintain your own well-being.

## REMEMBER TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

Caring for elderly parents while managing your own responsibilities can be emotionally and physically draining. Preventing caregiver burnout is crucial for both your own health and your ability to provide effective care:



- **Research and Understand Resources:** Familiarize yourself with available resources, including government programs, local support services, and funding options. This knowledge will prove invaluable as you navigate the caregiving journey.
- **Practice Self-Care and Self-Compassion:** Remember to prioritize your well-being. Taking breaks, engaging in activities you enjoy, and seeking emotional support are essential for maintaining your mental and emotional health. Eating well, exercising

regularly and getting enough sleep, when you can, are important too.

- **Ask for Help:** Recognize when you need assistance and don't hesitate to reach out to healthcare professionals, support groups, therapists, or other caregivers for guidance and emotional support. Health Coaching is available to PPO participants for personalized support to help you manage stress and build healthy habits.





## CHEESY SPINACH AND ARTICHOKE STUFFED SPAGHETTI SQUASH

This feel-good recipe is gluten-free and vegetarian, with high calcium and high fiber to support a well-rounded diet. Try roasting the squash instead of cooking it in the microwave it for sweeter, more intense flavor.

**Serves: 4.**

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (2 1/2 to 3 lb) spaghetti squash, cut in half lengthwise and seeds removed
- 3 tablespoons water, divided
- 1 5-oz package baby spinach
- 1 10-oz package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed and chopped
- 4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese, cubed and softened
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon salt and ground pepper
- Crushed red pepper & chopped fresh basil for garnish

### PREPARATION

1. Place squash cut-side down in a microwave-safe dish; add 2 tablespoons water. Microwave, uncovered, on high until tender, 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Combine spinach and the remaining 1 tbsp water in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and transfer to a large bowl.
3. Position rack in upper third of oven; preheat broiler.
4. Use a fork to remove squash from the shells into the bowl. Place shells on a baking sheet. Stir artichoke hearts, cream cheese, 1/4 cup Parmesan, salt and pepper into the squash mixture. Divide between squash shells and top with the remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan. Broil until the cheese is golden brown, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper and basil, if desired.

### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

Serving Size: 1 and 1/4 cups

**223 calories**      **9g fiber**  
**11g fat**      **10g protein**  
**23g carbs**

Source: modified from Eating Well at [eatingwell.com](http://eatingwell.com)

## FEELING OVERWHELMED? HEALTH COACHING IS HERE TO HELP!

If you're a PPO Plan participant feeling overwhelmed by family obligations, like caring for aging parents, you can contact a Health Coach to provide you with personalized support. The Health Coaching program helps PPO participants deal with stress, manage their blood pressure, improve their exercise, and build other healthy habits to improve overall wellness. The phone-based Health Coaching program focuses on health education to help you set and meet your health and wellness goals.

“My Health Coach encouraged me and is a good source of information”

— TRUST PARTICIPANT MICHELE ERDAHL

Your health coach will send you relevant information, offer personalized telephone support and encouragement as you work toward your goals with:



**Stress**



**Cholesterol**



**Weight Control**



**Back care**



**Exercise**



**Blood pressure**



**Nutrition**

Health Coaching is open to all eligible participants and spouses, 18 years of age or older.

Health Coaching is provided by WebMD ONE, an independent health management service provider.

### PPO Plan Participants

Call **(877) 362-9969** to find out more and sign up.



# EMBRACING MINDFUL SMARTPHONE USE

Have you ever felt a moment of panic when you misplaced your smartphone? If so, you're not alone. About 73% of people say they've experienced this same type of anxiety. In the US, adults dedicate 2-4 hours each day to digital interaction — amassing over 2,600 touches on their phones daily! While the rise in phone use seems necessary for modern life, recent studies have found that it can lead to negative physical and mental health.



## DESIGNED TO BE ADDICTIVE

The addiction to smartphones isn't just chance — it's neuroscience. The colors, sounds, and even vibrations are designed to keep users engaged. And it's not just the allure of the device but the feelings it can trigger. Positive social interactions release dopamine — a chemical in our brains that makes us feel good. Social media provides an almost unlimited supply of social interaction, both positive and negative. The desire to constantly seek out these positive interactions — and the release of more feel-good chemicals can lead to what the American Psychiatric Association calls a behavioral addiction, or a set of behaviors that a person becomes dependent on and craves. Gambling is another example of this type of addiction.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF PHONE ADDICTION

**Learn how to spot the signs of phone addiction!**

### Early warning signs of phone addiction:

- Spending increasing amounts of time on the device
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Lying about phone use



### Signs and symptoms of phone addiction include:

- Checking profiles anxiously, isolation from real-life relationships, and a fear of missing out.
- Feeling irritated when phone use is interrupted.
- Having difficulty limiting phone use, and reaching for the phone immediately when alone or bored.
- Experiencing phantom vibrations (thinking the phone vibrates when it doesn't).
- Relying on your phone to cope with emotions, or experiencing withdrawal when unreachable.
- Prioritizing your phone over relationships or jobs.
- Feelings of depression, anger, restlessness, and irritability.

While no specific time or frequency defines addiction, these warning signs, when combined, point to an underlying issue with phone use.

## PHONE ADDICTION TREATMENT

### The best remedy for phone addiction is a timeout.

Taking a timeout, even for a day, can provide you with relief. However, a month offers an even more effective reset for our dopamine-driven cravings. A month-long phone break curbs the anxiety and depression linked to excessive phone and social media use, allowing for a renewed appreciation of simpler pleasures.

**Various strategies can help you regain control over your usage.** Disabling notifications for social media apps and switching your display to black and white can diminish the phone's hold on your attention. Above all, practicing mindful technology use is key. When reaching for your phone, consider if it's truly worth your time.

**Deliberate planning is key.** Allocate specific times for phone use, steer clear of apps that suck you in, and prioritize those connecting you to real-life relationships. Increase awareness of your phone use by tracking your behavior and the time you spend on different apps.

Ultimately, breaking free from phone addiction takes conscious effort and a commitment to redefining your relationship with technology.

Sources: [harvard.edu](http://harvard.edu), [dartmouth.edu](http://dartmouth.edu), [stanford.edu](http://stanford.edu)





# IMPORTANT NUMBERS TO KNOW

## PPO PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Trust Office—Benefits, Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
VSP (Vision Service Plan)	(800) 877-7195
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(888) 479-2000
MCC Nurses—for Hospitalization/Health Conditions	(877) 362-9969 Option 2
MCC Nurses—for Behavioral Health	(206) 308-5632
Nurse Line	(877) 362-9969 Option 1
Health Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 3
Quit Tobacco Coaching	(877) 362-9969 Option 4
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5

## PRIVACY POLICY

Your health information is completely confidential, protected by federal law, and cannot be shared with your union or your employer without your permission.

All Trust programs are provided and managed by independent service providers contracted by the Trust. The information on your health status and conditions, your medical and prescription drug claims, and the information you may provide when participating is only used to offer you programs that could help you meet your health and wellness goals.

***By law, your health information cannot be used to deny healthcare coverage.***

## KAISER PLAN PARTICIPANTS

Trust Office—Eligibility, HRA	(206) 282-4500 or (800) 225-7620
Kaiser Permanente—Benefits, Claims Status	(888) 901-4636
Delta Dental PPO & Schedule Plan	(800) 554-1907
DeltaCare	(800) 650-1583
WellDyneRx—for Prescription Coverage	(800) 373-1568
Consulting Nurse Helpline	(800) 297-6877
Quit for Life® Tobacco Cessation	(800) 462-5327
LiveWell Fit	(800) 225-7620 Option 2, then 5
Chronic Conditions Workshops	(800) 992-2279

## DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO SAVE MORE IN 2024!

Avoid a higher deductible in 2024 by completing your annual health assessment by **Sept. 30, 2023**. If you are Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) eligible, you and your spouse, if married, can earn a significant portion of your HRA funding for next year's covered medical expenses. Visit [www.soundhealthwellness.com/pha](http://www.soundhealthwellness.com/pha) to complete yours today!





**SOUND HEALTH**  
& WELLNESS TRUST

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GET  
INVOLVED

This newsletter provides a general overview of plan benefits. Please refer to your Plan Booklet for specifics about covered expenses as well as exclusions and limitations. The information in this publication is meant to complement the advice of your healthcare providers, not to replace it. Before making any major changes in your medications, diet, or exercise, talk to your doctor.

## SQUASH YOUR FITNESS GOALS

Sign up for LiveWell Fit events today!

Carve out time for fitness this fall to earn prizes and HRA funding with LiveWell Fit. Plus, earn more when you work out with a friend. Bring an eligible Trust participant to their first event with you, and you'll both be entered to win a \$300 VISA gift card! With up to four event registration fees reimbursed by the Trust per year, athletes of all kinds will want to join in on the fun.



Earn funds for your HRA with LiveWell Fit. See the full list for details.

DATE	EVENT NAME & DESCRIPTION
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SEPTEMBER

16	Bremerton	<b>Terrain Race</b> — 3.1 mile obstacle course run/walk
16	Snohomish	<b>Spartan Beast</b> — 13 mile obstacle course and kids race
16	Vashon Island	<b>Passport 2 Pain</b> — 80, 58, 33 or 12 mile bike ride
16	Grand Coulee	<b>Run the Dam</b> — 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
16	Olympia	<b>Rock Candy Mountain Run</b> — 7 mile endurance trail run/walk
16	Seattle	<b>Orca Half Marathon</b> — 13.1 mile run
16	Redmond	<b>Get Your Rear In Gear</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk
16-17	Snohomish	<b>Spartan Race Super or Sprint</b> — 6.2 or 3.1 mile obstacle course and kids race
17	Spokane	<b>BRRC Sundae Sunday 10-Miler</b> — 10 mile run
17	Maple Valley	<b>Ironman 70.3 Washington</b> — 13.1 mile run, 56 mile bike, 1.2 mile swim
17	Quilcene	<b>Quilcene Oyster Races</b> — 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
23	Port Angeles	<b>The Big Hurt</b> — Multi-sport: mountain bike, kayak, road bike and 6.2 mile trail run
23	Seattle	<b>More Than Pink Walk</b> — Varies, 2.5 mile walk is encouraged
23-24	Black Diamond	<b>Tough Mudder</b> — 9.3, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk and kids obstacle course
24	Bellingham	<b>Bellingham Bay Marathon</b> — 26.2, 13.1, 6.2 or 3.1 mile run/walk
24	Kitsap	<b>Kitsap Color Classic</b> — 53, 35 or 25 mile bike ride
30	Spokane	<b>Bridge to Brunch 5k</b> — 3.1 mile run/walk