

The Beet

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THIS MONTH, MEET YOUR WELLSTYLES TEAM!

Dedicated to providing our members tools to thrive, in all aspects of life.



MIKAYLA CROUCH
Wellness
Support Specialist

Mikayla Crouch is the Wellness Support Specialist at Valley Schools. Mikayla has her Bachelors of Science degree in Exercise and Wellness from Arizona State University. Mikayla has first-hand experience in the benefits of having a healthy mind-body balance, and her goal is to encourage and educate others to recognize balance within their lives. She works to bring focus on creating a healthy mindset as well as creating a connection between, mind, body and environment. She is excited to share her passion in mind and body wellness with the Valley Schools community.



RILEY LONG
Wellness
Coordinator

Riley Long is the Wellness Coordinator at Valley Schools. She works alongside a variety of schools and public entities across Arizona to provide health focused resources to their most valuable asset - their employees! Riley knows first-hand the difference that a healthy body and mind can make on a person's mood, self-esteem, and professional success. She personally places this philosophy into her daily life by being a certified yoga instructor. Through fitness and yoga she provides others with a place of escape and intention. Riley has a Bachelor's of Science in Exercise and Wellness, with a General Business Minor from Arizona State University.



KENDALL TAYLOR
Wellness
Director

Kendall Taylor is the Wellness Director at Valley Schools. Kendall graduated from Arizona State University where she earned her Bachelors of Science Degree in Kinesiology with an emphasis on Exercise Science. After working for 5 years in the physical therapy setting Kendall realized her true passion was to focus on preventative healthcare and turned to health coaching and worksite wellness. With now over 12 years of experience in the healthcare field she has extensive knowledge in the development, implementation and management of corporate wellness programs. Her key focus has been on creating programs aligned with company culture to effectively create a plan that will help reduce chronic diseases and encourage healthy behaviors.



LAUREN BACHMAN
Clinical Director of
Wellness Services

Dr. Lauren Bachman earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of Minnesota. To complement her nursing curriculum, she studied mindfulness, meditation, and Reiki energy healing through the University of Minnesota's Center for Spirituality and Healing. After completing her degree, she accepted a position as a registered nurse in medical oncology at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. In the events of caring for patients and families facing complex illness, she observed the importance of a holistic approach to care and eagerly explored ways to achieve this.



KRISTEN DECOSTA
Registered
Dietitian (RD)

Kristen DeCosta is a Registered Dietitian at Valley Schools and holds a Bachelor's in Nutritional Science with an emphasis in dietetics from San Jose State University. She has experience as a clinical dietitian in the settings of mental disorders, eating disorders, and chronic illness and disease, as well as general weight management and healthy eating. Kristen understands and emphasizes the importance of behavior change in the areas of sleep, stress management, diet, exercise and movement as a critical preventative measure in reducing the incidence of chronic illness and disease. Kristen is thrilled to share her passion for preventative health and is eager to help further motivate change throughout the Valley Schools community!

February is all about:
SELF LOVE

FROM YOUR RD: SELF LOVE

In the list of priorities on your self-care agenda, where does healthy eating rank? You probably don't view healthy eating through the lens of self-care, but the impact your food choices have on your energy levels, mood, and overall health should position it at the top of the list. In fact, maintaining healthy eating habits is one of the most significant acts of self-love. Podcaster and self-care advocate, Sarah Starrs, writes "There's a cyclical pattern between self-love, our emotional well-being, and the way we eat. How we feel affects what and how much we eat and in turn, what and how much we eat affects how we feel. It's no exaggeration that we are what we eat. It turns out that self-love is at the root of a healthy diet." For tips on how to cultivate a more loving relationship with food, read her full article, "Adventures in Self-Love: Your Diet Can Be an Act of Self-Love" [You can find it here.](#)



FUEL: LEEKS 31 cal per 3.5oz of cooked leeks - 2X the vitamin C of oranges!

Leeks belong to the same family as onions, shallots, scallions, chives, and garlic. They look like a giant green onion but have a much milder, somewhat sweet flavor and a creamier texture when cooked. Wild leeks (ramps) are popular due to their potent flavor, which is a cross between garlic, scallions, and commercially grown leeks. Ramps are particularly rich in vitamin C, which aids immune health, tissue repair, iron absorption, and collagen production. In fact, they offer around twice as much vitamin C as the same quantity of oranges. High levels of manganese in leeks also helps reduce PMS symptoms and promote thyroid health.

HEALTHY RECIPES WITH LEEKS

- [Cauliflower Leek Soup](#)
- [Sausage Leek & Spinach Quiche](#)
- [Caramelized Fennel, Leek, & Onion Gratin](#)
- [Leek & Mushroom Chicken Skillet](#)
- [Leek, Mushroom & Chicken Soup](#)



MOVE: ACTION CREATES ACTION

According to Sports scientist Jack Groppe, and the findings of Organizations in MOTION, those who participated in 15 minutes of movement before completing a task were able to complete it in a shorter amount of time, therefore, being more productive.

Incorporating movement into the workday is extremely important because it promotes blood flow to the brain and body. If you are interested in boosting productivity, try setting an hourly reminder to get moving! Maybe try going for a walk or a quick bodyweight workout to activate the body and create momentum for the rest of the day!

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REST: BOX BREATHING

What is one relaxation practice that can be done anywhere at any time? Something that requires no equipment and very little time? If you guessed breathwork, you are correct!

There are several methods...box breathing or "square breathing" has been shown to improve concentration, focus, performance, and stress relief.

How to practice Box Breathing:

1. Take a slow inhale for 4 seconds
2. Hold at the top for 4 seconds
3. Slowly exhale for 4 seconds
4. Repeat

Newton's Law of Motion
"An object in motion stays in motion unless acted upon by an external force. An object at rest stays at rest."

Get moving in order to stimulate movement, change, and success into your life!



**CLICK HERE FOR
THIS MONTH'S EPISODE!
BALANCED BREAKFASTS**

SIGN UP FOR
BETTER BITES



SCAN TO
JOIN THE
WELLSTYLES
MAILING LIST



LEARN FROM A REGISTERED DIETITIAN HOW TO SHOP FOR + COOK GREAT FOOD

Better Bites of Food and Knowledge® is a monthly educational series developed by our Registered Dietitian on staff, Kristen DeCosta, RD and the WellStyles team. Sent direct to your inbox each month is a themed collection of hand picked recipes, interactive videos in the kitchen with Kristen including detailed prep and serving instructions. Recipe cards are also provided, with the entire process spelled out for you, downloadable as a PDF ready to print or save. By scanning the QR code, you can sign up for Better Bites and start focusing on gaining knowledge, nutrients and added strength to thrive.



REFRAME: THREE WAYS TO SEE THE GOOD IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Being judgmental of others and ourselves, has a tendency to hold us back from living a fulfilling and meaningful life. Despite our best efforts, we all judge. It is a natural instinct. So how can we work on becoming less judgmental? Here are three ways we can practice:

- 1. Be more mindful.** Pause. Catch yourself before you speak or take any sort of action. See if you can gain an understanding of where the person may be coming from. Try to rephrase your critical internal thought into a positive one, or at least a neutral one.
- 2. Depersonalize.** When someone disagrees with us or somehow makes our life difficult, remember that it's most likely not about us.
- 3. Look at your own behavior.** Sometimes, we may be judging someone for something that we do ourselves, or have done. This is a hard one to accept, but is often a common driver behind our judgments.



DETOX: LETTING GO OF WHAT IS NOT SERVING YOU

As we focus attention around self-love and appreciation this month, similar connections can be made in the realm of detox. We often forget the impact that negative relationships, mindsets, and/or emotions can have on health; so this is a gentle reminder to love on yourself and let go of what is not serving you.

Broadly, this can be appreciated by an Ernest Holmes quote, "Where your mind goes, energy flows". Scientifically, we recognize the influence the mind has on how the body functions in well documented "placebo" effects - where inert substances such as a sugar pill elicit the same or better outcome as a pharmaceutical drug or medical therapy. Or on the contrary, a noticeable effect, where an individual still receives a sugar pill or inert substance, but experiences "side-effect symptoms" because they were told the drug has the potential for them; or their health status worsened because their belief was that the drug couldn't help. This fascinating phenomena has provided guidance to ongoing research to better understand the mind body connection.

In fact, many neuroscience (brain) researchers propose that both the relationship with the healthcare provider (social context) and the individual patient's perceived beliefs (mindset and emotions) are more important in eliciting a therapeutic or positive outcome than the treatment/intervention (drug or procedure) itself. Which brings us back to some simple, yet powerful takeaways.

- You can't heal a body you dislike, don't trust, abuse, etc.
- Positive affirmations and mindset shifts can be the first step in changing behavior.
- Letting go of beliefs that are limiting and don't serve you are imperative to reach your health goals - no matter where you are on the health or disease spectrum.
- Consider journaling, practicing gratitude, breathing, meditation, or engaging in a form of counseling to better identify what you might be carrying around with you, and find strategies to begin to release or detox them from your life.



CONNECT: SELF LOVE IS STAYING ACTIVE

Make a date with yourself and your valentine and run the Lovers Lane 5k at Arizona Falls, a beautiful arrangement of river waterfalls right in the middle of Arcadia (pictured to the left). A perfect spot for photos and surrounded by options for fun before and after. [Click here to register on roadracerunner.com.](https://www.roadracerunner.com)

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion" - Dalai Lama

FROM YOUR WELLNESS TEAM: SELF LOVE IS COMPASSION

Compassion is defined as sympathetic consciousness and understanding of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. Compassion is one of the basic aspects of building and maintaining quality relationships. It is also important to identify self-compassion, which can be defined as being kind and understanding towards yourself when confronted with personal failings.

Why is it important to show compassion to others, as well as ourselves? Luckily, research has proven to have multiple benefits for showing and being shown compassion, as well as self-compassion.

Here are just a few reasons why:

- Receiving compassion is related to increased happiness and decreased depression. It promotes social connection and positive aging. It is associated with important care and health outcomes.
- Practicing self-compassion buffers against anxiety and is linked to increased psychological well-being as well as reduces burn-out among high stress occupations.
- Compassion benefits both those who receive it and those who share it. As technology use increases and we have less face-to-face interaction, we are becoming a less compassionate society.

Fortunately, here are some ways that we can practice being compassionate every day:

- Avoid judgment. It is impossible to know all of the factors that have led a person toward their current predicament; nor how we would fare in the same situation. Considering our own similarities to others in need will help to promote empathy and compassion.
- Practice gratitude. Reflecting on the things in your life that you appreciate will foster a sense of compassion for those less fortunate.
- Be kind to yourself. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Remember that all human beings are flawed and will make mistakes; ongoing rumination and self-loathing serves no benefit to you or anyone around you.

Yours truly,
Your Wellness Team

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