

The Frosty Four



Four-week winter wellness challenge



Welcome to The Frosty Four!



The Frosty Four provides ideas and activities that can increase your well-being over the winter months. In addition to keeping up-to-date on your vaccines and washing your hands to help avoid getting sick, these habits can help you feel your best during the colder, darker time of year.

Challenge yourself (and your co-workers) to focus on these four areas during the next four weeks:

- ✓ Food & Fitness (physical health)
- ✓ Feelings & Fun (mental/emotional health)
- ✓ Friends & Family (social health)
- ✓ Fast & Frugal (financial health)

Winter can be a difficult time to keep up with healthy habits.

The Frosty Four is for anyone who wants extra support, encouragement, and information on ways to eat healthier, stay active, and practice healthy habits that improve well-being. This challenge focuses on the four pillars that support well-being. These pillars—physical, emotional, social, and financial—are composed of many individual habits, skills, and activities. This holistic approach offers simple, practical tools for living a healthier and more fulfilling life.

The Frosty Four is a non-diet approach that focuses on the pillars of well-being. Studies indicate that non-diet programs can have positive and lasting effects on many dimensions of well-being. This guide will walk you through evidence-backed wellness tips to help you thrive throughout the winter season and all year long!

When it comes to boosting well-being, different things work for different people.

Here's how to get started with The Frosty Four challenge:

- Review The Frosty Four materials on the following pages.
- Recognize what you're already doing to care for yourself.
- Pick one or more activities to practice each week from the four options.
- Watch for your weekly "Frosty bite" newsletter and tracker from your coordinator.
- Use the "buddy system" (friends, co-workers, or family) to add fun and support.



Did you know?

Lacking social connection can increase the risk for premature death as much as smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day!

The Frosty Four encourages you to prioritize social connection. To learn more about how the structure, function and quality of our relationships contributes to our own health and the health and safety of our community, check out [The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community](#).

Hennepin County
Public Health
hennepin.us/publichealth



WEEK 1 – FOOD & FITNESS

(physical health)



The first week of The Frosty Four will focus on physical health — recognizing the need for physical activity, sleep, and nutrition — for overall well-being.

Review the four options below. Recognize what you are already doing well to care for your physical health, and then choose your focus for the week.

Four activities:

1. Get 7–8 hours of sleep per night.

Why it's important: Sleep is one of the most important things you can do to maintain good health. According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), most adults need at least seven hours of sleep a night for a healthy brain. Sleep allows your body and mind to recharge, leaving you refreshed and alert when you wake up.

Tips for success: Try to go to bed at the same time every night and begin to unwind an hour or so beforehand. Consider keeping screens (phones, TV) out of the bedroom. Make sure you have a comfortable place to sleep. Don't eat or drink caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of food just before bedtime. Exercise during the day can also help you sleep better at night. You might consider working on activities 1 and 2 together this week.

2. Move your body in a way you enjoy for at least 30 minutes a day.

Why it's important: Exercise is one of the most important things you can do to care for your health! According to the [National Institute on Aging](#), regular exercise can help you: keep and improve your strength, have more energy to do the things you want to do, and manage and prevent some diseases. Exercise can also help you sleep better and reduce stress and anxiety. Other benefits: controlling your blood pressure and boosting your mood.

Tips for success: Find something you enjoy doing and schedule it in your calendar like you would an important meeting. You do not have to go to a gym or even leave your home with all the online workout options available today. (Search “free workouts” on YouTube.) Ditch the “all or nothing” mentality. Some exercise is better than none. If you have not been active for a while, start small and build up over time. The physical benefits of exercise can take time to see, but the mood boost is immediate — notice that and use it to stay motivated.

3. Eat veggies with most meals.

Why it's important: According to the [USDA](#), people who regularly eat more vegetables and fruits can reduce their risk of some chronic diseases. Vegetables provide key nutrients our bodies need, such as vitamins, potassium for healthy blood pressure, and fiber for healthy cholesterol. Veggies are also low in calorie density; when you fill your plate with vegetables you have less room for the unhealthy stuff!

Tips for success: Try different ways of preparing veggies to find what works for you. Many people enjoy oven-roasted vegetables because roasting brings out the natural sweetness. Snack on raw veggies with hummus or another healthy dip. Try zucchini (zoodles) for pasta or grated cauliflower instead of rice. Have a side salad with lunch or dinner. Don't forget about frozen veggies that you can easily steam in the bag. For breakfast, try adding frozen spinach to a smoothie, or tossing greens and other veggies into an egg scramble.

4. Plan or pack a healthy lunch and snacks for your workday.

Why it's important: Whether it's at the office or at home, work tends to be busier than we think it will be, which can lead to grabbing whatever is fast and easy, or skipping meals altogether. It's much easier to make better choices when you have a good variety of nutritious foods available. Planning some of your meals can also help you save time and money. And when you have your daytime food planned out, you only need to worry about dinner!

Tips for success: Keep it simple. Choose a few things to prepare that you can eat on repeat throughout the week. Some options include: healthy bowls like this [Winter Superfoods Bowl](#), mason jar salads like this [Southwest Chicken and Black Bean Salad](#), or soup like this [Easy Turkey Chili](#). For snacks try to include a mix of protein, carbohydrates, and fat to help you stay satisfied and ready to focus on your next task at hand. Think cucumbers with hummus, a handful of almonds, plain Greek yogurt with fruit, homemade popcorn, or hard-boiled eggs with fruit.



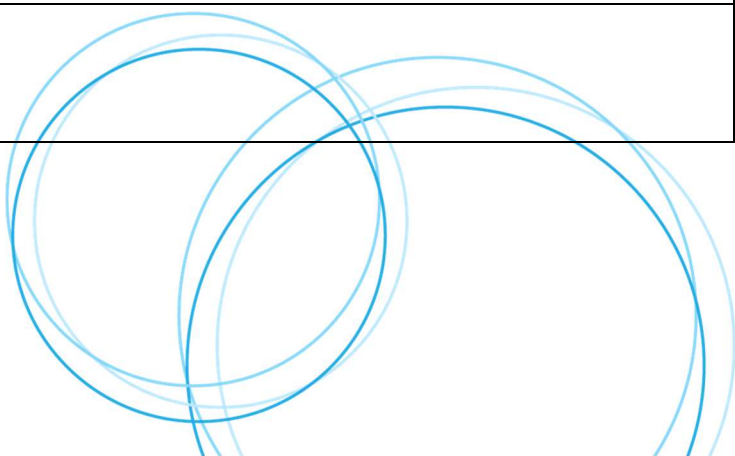
The Frosty Four tracking log – WEEK 1

If you would like help to stay accountable for your well-being goals, feel free to use this Frosty Four tracking log. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Place a checkmark for each day that you worked on one or more of the four health activities.
2. Jot down any high points (positive feelings or experiences) you had this week.
3. Make note of the things you plan to continue working on going forward.

 Feel free to take photos and share them using #thefrostyfour for extra accountability and fun!

Week 1: physical health	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
7-8 hours sleep							
30 minutes movement							
Veggies with most meals							
Plan/pack healthy lunch and snacks							
High points of this week:							
Actions I will plan to continue going forward:							



WEEK 2 – FEELINGS & FUN (mental/emotional health)



The second week of The Frosty Four will focus on mental/emotional health. Understand that a healthy body starts with a healthy mind. Find ways to grow with your thoughts and feelings and make time for fun. Review the four options below. Recognize what you are already doing well to care for your mental and emotional health, and then choose your focus for the week.

Four options:

1. Notice victories that do not include the scale (for example: you have more energy, you slept better, your workouts get easier, you feel more confidence).

Why it's important: There are better ways to measure health improvements than the number on a scale. Non-scale victories (or NSVs) refer to anything — besides the number on the scale — that shows better overall well-being. If you notice (and celebrate!) NSVs it can help motivate you to keep going with your healthy habits. You will also notice the positive changes happening within your body as you improve your health.

Tips for success: Think about the non-scale victories that are most important to you. Start by gathering some “data” (for example: hours of sleep a night or number of push-ups you can do). Then, simply pay attention to how those things change throughout the week and going forward. You can use the “high points” section of your tracking log to write down your NSVs if you’d like!

2. Eat one of your meals mindfully every day.

Why it's important: [Research shows](#) that focusing on eating has a bigger impact on how satisfying a meal is than the number of calories. Mindful eating can help you enjoy your food more while eating less. Over time it can help you improve your relationship with food. Mindful eating can also help with digestion as you slow down and chew more thoroughly. Learning the skill of mindfulness can help you better control where your attention goes so that you can spend your time and energy on the things that are most meaningful to you.

Tips for success: Choose one meal a day where you can take the time to sit down and eat alone. For most people, this tends to be breakfast or lunch. Eat your meal sitting down at a table in a quiet place (no phones, TV, or music in the background). Mindful eating simply means focusing on eating your food and doing nothing else. Sit down and notice what your food looks and smells like. Then take your first bites and notice the taste. Chew your food thoroughly, setting your fork or spoon down between bites. If you find your mind wandering, simply notice that and bring your attention back to your eating. Remember that eating mindfully might be something new, but the more you practice eating mindful meals, the easier it becomes.

3. Seek out laughter and inspiration.

Why it's important: Laughter brings people together, relieves stress, and sets a positive tone. Laughter even improves physical health! Inspiration can open you to do and achieve new things. Inspired people report that they better understand their own abilities and gain more self-esteem and optimism.

Tips for success: Consume funny or inspirational content via podcasts, books, TV, movies, or social media. Spend more time with funny or inspiring people and less time with people who drain your energy or bring you down. Intentionally smile more throughout the day. Smiling is like a “warm up” for laughing. Smiling at others is a way to spread positivity. Last, but not least, learn to laugh at and be inspired by yourself!

Laughter is the best medicine.

– Bennett Cerf

4. Keep a food-mood journal.

Why it's important: A food-mood journal helps you keep track of what you eat and drink, and how those things affect you, both your body and your mind. It can also help you identify any foods that you don't tolerate well. It can help you take a closer look at your relationship with food, determine how certain things make you feel, and figure out what steps you can take to reach your well-being goals.

Tips for success: Decide if you want to use paper and pen or an online tracker for your food-mood journal. Log everything you consume — “If you bite it, write it.” The more specific you get with your tracking, the more data you will have. Track with the amount of detail that feels right and is simple for you. Also note when you ate and how you felt before, during, and after. Try to log in the moment. Snap a photo of your plate if you can't log what you ate right away. Try not to judge what you ate or criticize your choices. Think of your journal as a tool to help you learn what foods make you feel your best. If you miss a meal or even a full day of tracking, just get back to it with your next meal.



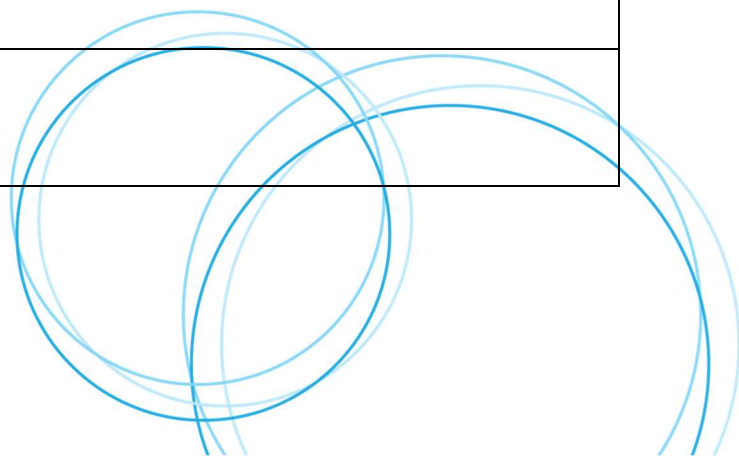
The Frosty Four tracking log – WEEK 2

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1. Place a checkmark for each day that you worked on one or more of the four health activities.
2. Jot down any high points (positive feelings or experiences) you had this week.
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Week 2: mental/ emotional health	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Non-scale victories (NSVs)							
Mindful meal							
Laughter/ inspiration							
Food-mood journal							
High points of this week:							
Actions I will plan to continue going forward:							



WEEK 3 – FRIENDS & FAMILY (social health)



The third week of The Frosty Four will focus on social health — our ability to form good relationships with others, from coworkers to romantic partners, from family members to friends. It also includes feeling a sense of belonging. Review the four options below. Recognize what you are already doing well to care for your social health, and then choose your focus for the week.

Four options:

1. Exercise with a friend or family member for at least 30 minutes (sledding, skiing, snow shoeing, skating, playing ball, walking the dog, etc.)

Why it's important: Being active with friends or family has lots of benefits that can improve your physical and social health. Exercise buddies can support you, motivate you, and challenge you to try new things. Research shows you are way more likely to “show up” if you exercise with someone — and best of all being active together can be fun!

Tips for success: No exercise buddies? You can meet and make new friends by joining a walking or running club, a Zumba dance group, or a local charity event. For more ideas read [7 Ways to Find A Workout Buddy You'll Actually Like](#). If you already work out by yourself, you can also get your family involved by scheduling favorite activity days. Let the kids take charge of a family workout, or just put on music and dance. The American Heart Association offers [Daily Tips to Help Keep Your Family Active](#).

2. Involve friends or family in shopping and cooking healthy meals.

Why it's important: Cooking with friends and family is a great way to connect. You can divide up the tasks, talk, laugh, share cooking ideas and recipes, and more. When families (or anyone who lives in the same household) prepare meals together, they are more likely to eat healthier. Involving kids in planning and prep teaches them skills and helps them get familiar with a variety of foods. See the online article [Cooking with kids; a gift for all](#) for tips on cooking with kids of all ages.

Tips for success: Set aside 15 minutes weekly for meal planning — give everyone a voice and share the responsibility. Want to make grocery shopping with kids less stressful? See [10 Tips For Grocery Shopping With Kids](#).

Social health is an important part of overall health that is closely tied to mental well-being. Research shows that those with positive relationships tend to be more physically fit. They also have healthier hearts and immune systems.

3. Find a buddy, an accountability partner, or join an accountability group to help form new, healthy habits and build social connections.

Why it's important: Wait, what? What is an accountability partner or group and who is it for? It simply means someone who can follow your progress, encourage you, and help you stay motivated. This could be a buddy, family member, partner, or group. It's also a way to strengthen relationships and build connections. A true accountability partnership includes coaching each other.

Tips for success: Finding an accountability partner starts with one simple step: Ask friends, co-workers, or acquaintances if they want to partner with you. You could also ask your social media contacts. Make sure your partner has similar goals and interests. Set a trial period. Even if you can't meet in person, you can choose a time for regular virtual check-ins. For more ideas see [How to Build New Habits With An Accountability Partner](#).

Anything is possible when you have the right people there to support you.

– Misty Copeland

4. Celebrate/socialize without food.

Why it's important: Many of us think of food when it comes to good times. But food does not always have to equal fun! Holidays and special celebrations are one thing — but it's important to find ways to socialize that don't always include food. This can help avoid emotional eating, save money, and find other ways to connect. The most important reasons for socializing have nothing to do with food.

Tips for success: If most of your social interactions do revolve around food, maybe it's time to find new ways to socialize. Check out the online article [Ways to Socialize Without Spending Money](#). Tips include finding free events or volunteering together. Find additional ideas in [15 Simple Ways to Celebrate Without Food](#). Holidays can make it especially hard to separate food from celebrations. Try to do fun things too, like card or game parties, ice skating, or snow hiking. More ideas can be found at [15 Nonfood Celebrations to Try](#).



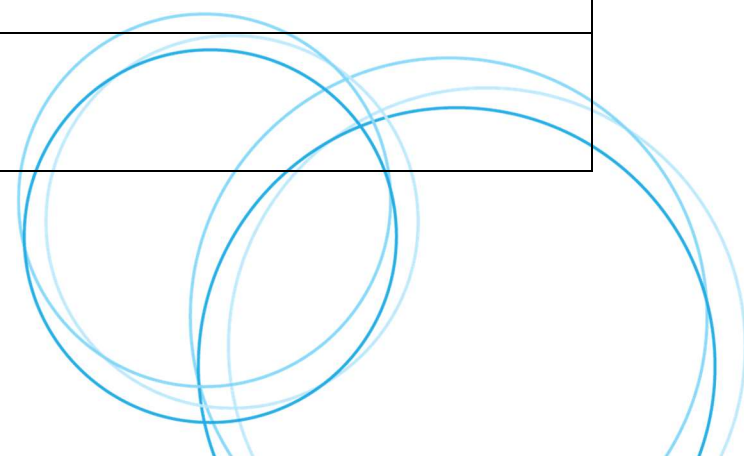
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Week 3: social health	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Exercise with friends/family							
Cook with friends/family							
Check in with an accountability partner or group							
Socialize without food							
High points of this week:							
Actions I will plan to continue going forward:							



WEEK 4 – FAST & FRUGAL (financial health)



The final week of The Frosty Four will focus on financial health — save time and money by making a few small changes to how and where you buy, prepare, and eat your meals. Some people struggle to buy the food they need. When financial worries are a constant factor in your life, it can be hard on your well-being. Review the four options below. Recognize what you are already doing well to care for your financial health, and then choose your focus for the week.

Four options:

1. Plan your meals and [shop with a list](#).

Why it's important: Shopping with a list can save you time, money, and reduce stress. Research shows that by sticking to a list you can save up to 25% off your grocery bill. A list also helps with meal planning, cuts down on trips to the store, reduces the time spent shopping, and decreases stress.

Tips for success: Check out [Shop Simple with MyPlate](#) for tips on shopping, planning, and recipes. You can use Shop Simple on your phone, computer, or tablet. Keep a list of favorite meals; it comes in handy when planning your menus and shopping lists.

2. Investigate free and low-cost food options.

Why it's important: Over the past few years, Minnesota has seen a big jump in the need for free and affordable food. Managing your food budget can go a long way towards helping with other expenses. This includes careful grocery shopping or exploring lower cost food options.

Tips for success: Visit the Hennepin Healthcare [Food Resource Locator](#); enter your zip code to find food shelves, food resources for seniors, free meals, discount groceries, and farmers' markets. Those in need of free food can also use this [Hennepin County Food Resource Map](#) to locate options. Find out how you can get more fruits and vegetables for women and children through the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) [state](#) or [county](#) program. You can also manage food costs by shopping at discount stores and buying in bulk. Other things to try are reducing food waste, using coupons, and trying store brands.

3. Cook simple meals (5 ingredients or less) at home.

Why it's important: Research shows that people who regularly eat home-cooked meals tend to be happier and healthier. They also eat less sugar and processed foods. Meals with just five ingredients are usually quick, easy, budget-friendly — and delicious. These recipes typically do not need a lot of prep time or cooking skills. They are also usually easier to shop for and make.

Tips for success: Check out these websites for recipes. To reduce cost, look for recipes that use in-season, canned, frozen, or dried fruits and vegetables.

- [Visit 94 Healthy Recipes That Only Need 5 Ingredients \(Or Less!\)](#)
- [50 Best 5 Ingredient Healthy Dinner Recipes](#)

4. Choose plant-based protein.

Why it's important: Eating a plant-based diet is good for you and good for our planet. Plant proteins are rich in fiber, vitamins, and other nutrients, and cost less than animal proteins.

Tips for success: Make vegetable-based one-pot meals at least once a week. Use soy or other beans instead of higher cost protein sources like meat, fish, or poultry. Find out [Which plant-based foods are high in protein](#). Also check out these [ideas for snacks and meals](#). Try one or more this week. [Meatless Mondays](#) may be a great place to start!


The single biggest money saver for a food budget is eating at home. Cooking at home can save you time as well as money. This includes time spent traveling to and from restaurants, waiting for food, and waiting to pay.

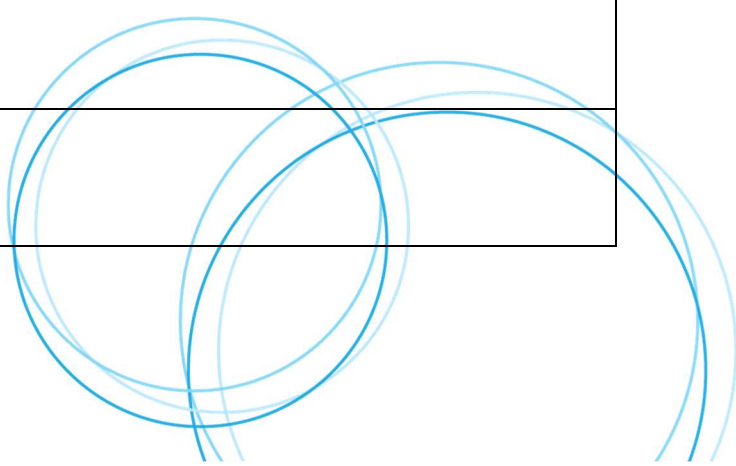


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Week 4: financial health	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Plan meals							
Try free/low-cost options							
Cook at home							
Choose plant-based protein							
High points of this week:							
Actions I will plan to continue going forward:							

The Frosty Four

Weekly “Frosty bite” newsletter

Week 1 – Food & Fitness



Positive health habits can help decrease your stress, lower your risk of disease, and increase your energy. Moving more and eating well are two things that keep your body working properly.

Move more

Experts recommend that adults get at least 150 minutes (two and a half hours) of moderate physical activity a week. Every minute counts when it comes to movement, and you will benefit from even a little activity. Here are some ways to reach the recommendation:

- **Look for easy ways to move.** Park your car far from the building entrance, take the stairs whenever you can, stand often and sit less.
- **Take movement breaks** to fend off mid-day sleepiness, stiff muscles, and foggy thinking. A quick, brisk walk will wake you up, loosen you up, and clear you up.
- **Move during your down time.** Watching TV? Do a few jumping jacks, squats, or biceps curls. Get down on the floor and hold a plank, do some push-ups, or a few stretches.
- **Move in the great outdoors.** Play in the leaves, build a snowman, ride your bike, or play hopscotch. Being out in nature not only makes it easy to move but also does wonders for your mental health.
- **Chores count as movement.** Wash your car, rake leaves, clean the house, or do laundry. Know that all active chores count towards the goal of at least 150 minutes of movement each week.

Eat well

Eating well is one of the best ways to prevent or delay health problems. In general, eat a variety of foods, limit sugar and saturated fats, watch out for salt, and be aware of portion sizes. To reach your goals, experts advise making small, gradual changes. For more information [view this infographic](#) and [Plan Your Plate](#).

The Frosty Four

Weekly “Frosty bite” newsletter

Week 2 – Feelings & Fun



Food is an important part of everyday life. Food provides nourishment for your body so you can cope with activities of the day. At times, though, food is used for other reasons such as:

- Fatigue – when you don’t get enough sleep, a hormone (ghrelin) that makes you want to eat goes up and a hormone (leptin) that decreases hunger goes down.
- Boredom – eating to give yourself something to do or to break up the tedium of a boring task (for example, a long car ride).
- Emotions – stress, anxiety, sadness, or other emotions are often a trigger to eat to calm or distract yourself.
- Social eating – enjoying the company of others and getting caught up in the fun of a social event may lead to not paying attention to when you have had enough to eat.
- Pleasure – sometimes food just looks or smells too good to pass up.

Everyone eats for reasons besides hunger. If this happens occasionally it’s not a concern. But if food and eating become your “go to” coping mechanism every day, it may be time to take a closer look.

What to do?

1. **Eat mindfully.** Plan out what you are going to eat and give yourself adequate time for your meal or snack. Replace dine and dash with eat and enjoy.
2. **Keep a food-mood journal.** Identify why you are eating for those times when you don’t feel hunger in your stomach. Are you anxious? Are you sad? Are you excited? You may not always be able to control the situation that results in feelings that lead you to eat, but you can always control how you react to it.
3. **Identify how you want to react.** Have a plan (or two or three) ready for those occasions when you are tempted to eat for non-hunger reasons:
 - Call a friend or family member to talk with.
 - Get some physical activity.
 - Try journaling.
 - Go outside for fresh air.
 - Take a nap.
 - Mow the lawn or work on the garden.
 - Meditate or practice yoga.
 - Engage in a hobby, game, puzzle, woodworking, sewing, reading, or other activity that you enjoy.

The Frosty Four

Weekly “Frosty bite” newsletter

Week 3 – Friends & Family



Loneliness continues to rise in the United States. Since the pandemic changed the way we work and live, it has been harder for some to maintain relationships. Social well-being comes from sharing, developing, and maintaining meaningful relationships with others. Positive social health can help you build support systems and stay physically and mentally healthier. Try these tips to take care of yourself, stay connected, and build new relationships:

- Build your social health by starting with a healthy self. We can be better friends, co-workers, neighbors, and parents when we take care of ourselves. Good sleep, good food, and good thoughts are all part of [Self Care 101](#).
- Ask for help when you need it. This is an important step in self-care but can be difficult to do. You can start by reading the checklist on [My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?](#)
- Learn to identify your feelings. Are you feeling mad, sad, scared, or glad? Your emotions are an important part of your social well-being. Learning to identify, express, and control your feelings can help you form better relationships and help you understand if your relationships are healthy.
- Create experiences that build positive emotions. Examples include helping a friend or neighbor, doing acts of kindness, or volunteering. For more ideas check out the online article [6 Exercises for Positive Emotions: Start Your Upward Spiral Today](#).
- Restore or preserve relationships with your family by increasing positive interactions. Researcher and therapist John Gottman recommends trying for a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. Giving everyone space and grace can rebuild frayed connections.
- Make the effort to stay connected to friends and co-workers. Be active together, use phone or video calls, social media, virtual game nights, or safe gatherings. We need people who will laugh with us, listen to us, and support us when things get tough.
- Build your communication skills by practicing active listening. The better *you* listen, the more you will be listened to. Learning to listen well relies on a few simple ideas. Watch the TED Talk [10 Ways to have a better conversation](#).

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.

– Dr. Steven Covey

The Frosty Four

Weekly “Frosty bite” newsletter

Week 4 – Fast & Frugal



What does financial wellness mean? It means different things to different folks, as evidenced by survey results from the Employee Benefit Research Institute. The responses to the question “What does financial well-being mean to you” included the following:

- 34%: Not being stressed about my finances
- 18%: Being debt free
- 16%: Having enough savings that I’m not worried about unexpected expenses
- 16%: Financial freedom to make choices to enjoy life
- 12%: Being able to meet my day-to-day and monthly expenses
- 4%: Being able to retire when I want to

More importantly, what does financial well-being mean to you? It’s a great question to discuss with your family. And, to assess your current financial health, you can take a quick quiz from the [Consumer Protection Financial Bureau](#) (also available in Spanish). This quiz does not ask for any personal financial information but allows you to compare your financial well-being score to other adults in the United States. You can also fill out a [free spending tracker](#) — one of the most highly recommended steps towards financial well-being. [East by Midwest](#) lists 10 ideas, including:

3 reasons to track your spending

1. Know your actual spending habits
2. See where you can cut back
3. Create a reasonable budget

What about your food costs? Do you know how much you spend on groceries (and eating out)? Try tracking your food spending for a month. [Rhythm+ Grace](#) offers:

4 ways to track your grocery spending

1. Use cash — bring it in an envelope that you can also use for receipts.
2. Use the cash envelope system without the cash — write the amount of your grocery budget at the top, put receipts in the envelope, and subtract from your budget.
3. Use an app to track your spending.
4. Use a simple spreadsheet.

Wonder if you are spending too much for groceries? Check out the USDA’s useful weekly and monthly guideline at the [Cost of Food Reports](#). The monthly food plans are broken down into four categories: thrifty, low cost, moderate cost, and liberal.

More people should learn to tell their dollars where to go instead of asking them where they went.

– Roger Babson