

Community Life: Social Interaction and Mental Health



Diana Sweatman
Director of Community Life

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**We don’t stop playing
because we grow old.
We grow old because
we stop playing.**
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

There are several great reasons why senior residences have social activity programs – but for us the most compelling reason is the strong link between social interaction and good mental health.

Our commitment to fostering social interaction forms the core of our philosophy that drives Community Life programming at Christie Gardens.

Community Life exists to serve, support, and foster the creation of social programming for our community members.

Social interaction is critical for mental and physical health. According to Dr. Emma Seppala, author of *The Happiness Track*, “Social connectedness generates a positive feedback

loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being...” contributing to lower levels of anxiety and depression.

From the arts to the intellectual, and from physical fitness to the spiritual, the diversity of our programming creates opportunities for our community members to connect with those who are like-minded, and helps to spark new friendships and find avenues for personal growth. All of which are ways to ward off depression and enhance self-esteem.

Life is so much more than eating right and exercising daily, it is our relationships that weave meaning into the fabric of our lives.

Research has shown that people who have satisfying relations with family, friends, and their community are happier, have fewer health problems, and may even live longer.

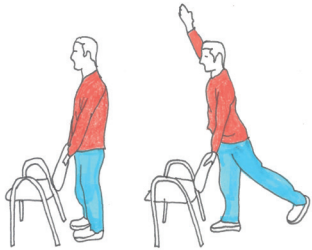
Body Mechanics: Standing Superman

From a movement perspective, the body is composed of three major areas: shoulder girdle, spine, and pelvic region. The Standing Superman is unique because it targets all three of these areas.

When performing the Standing Superman, the hip extension activates the lower back and gluteous maximus muscles, and the flexion of the shoulder activates the anterior deltoid, pec major and scapular stabilizers. The combination of these movements will activate the muscles along the spine as well.

Cheers to your Health!

Jeff Dubé, BSc, PTS, ATC
Fitness Program Coordinator



- 1 Standing behind a chair, extend the right arm overhead and the left leg back (being sure to keep both limbs straight). Exhale during this movement.
- 2 Return to neutral position while inhaling.
- 3 Repeat movement with left arm and right leg. Continue alternating until 20 repetitions are completed.



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30 gardens
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a community you can have faith in
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The Effects of Stress on Mental Health

Stress is an unavoidable part of life. In fact, some level of stress is essential and has a positive effect on our lives. Consider winning a game you were trying really hard at or that public speaking event you aced. This kind of stress can elevate our self-esteem and make us feel alive.

However, too much stress can cause negative effects on our physical and mental health.

It is important to note that everyone experiences stress differently and what might be positive stress for some, could be negative stress for others.

When you experience a stressful event, your body has a series of responses:

Mobilizing Energy
Where you release energy, your heart beats faster, and you breathe more quickly.

Consuming Energy Stores
When you remain in a state of stress for a longer period of time, your body begins to release your storage of sugars and fats. You will feel both driven and tired at the same time. You may even experience anxiety, negative thinking, memory loss, and it could cause you to be more susceptible to cold and flu viruses.

Draining Energy Stores
Prolonged periods of stress will cause a drain on your body’s energy stores to become so great that you cannot sustain it. You may experience insomnia, errors in judgement, personality changes, and may be at greater risk for serious health problems.

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FOODS TO BEAT A BAD MOOD

STRESSED

CHOCOLATE may help reduce the stress hormones that are swimming in your body.

SLUGGISH

Eat folate rich foods like SPINACH to improve concentration.

CRANKY

Eat an APPLE with PEANUT BUTTER for your sugar and energy levels to remain stable.

ANXIOUS

Eat SALMON for Omega-3 fatty acids to help tame your anxiety.

ANGRY

Consider sipping a cup of GREEN TEA if you need to calm down fast.

SAD

Turn to LOW FAT MILK for Vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency may be affecting your mood.

The Effects of Stress on Mental Health

... continues from front cover

Managing and anticipating your stress when possible can help prevent some of the negative effects on your mental health. Triggers for stress may be: major life events, such as moving or the death of a loved one; long-term worries such as financial concerns or chronic illnesses; and daily hassles such as waiting or technology that doesn't work properly.

Coping with stress when it occurs is an important step to prevent some of the negative effects that may occur.

Methods to cope with stress are various and different for everyone, but some of the following suggestions may work for you:

Identify your Causes of Stress

Are there underlying reasons for stress from a more surface concern? Once you identify the cause of the stress you may be able to resolve it.

Take charge of the solutions to problems that you can control, this will help your self-esteem as you affect change.

Talk about your Problems

You may feel relief by simply venting your frustrations or you might find a solution you hadn't thought of yet.

Learn New Techniques

Learn about stress management through different resources, including books, videos, courses and workshops.

Exercise and Breathing

Reduce your tension through exercise, deep breathing, and meditation. Sometimes a simple walk outside may help to clear your mind.

Positive Thinking

Finally, try not to be too hard on yourself. Negative thinking such as "I can't, I won't, I should, or I must" can cause you more stress than the original trigger.

By making realistic goals, scheduling tasks you need to complete, scheduling leisure time, breaking large tasks into smaller pieces, and delegating to others, we can help to prevent negative stress and the harm it may cause to our health.

Jocelyn Alves
Director of Health and Wellness

Managing Diet to Support Good Mental Health

Many factors can affect our mental health, including our genetics, significant life events, and where we grew up. We may not be able to control all the factors that contribute to our mental health, but considering the foods we eat is one way we can effect a positive impact on our brain function.

Recent studies have shown a link between our dietary patterns and brain health and this has led to a new area of study called Nutritional Psychology.

Nutrition Psychology is defined as the study of the role that nutrition plays in the cause of mental health issues as well as their treatment. For example, diets that include low levels of junk food and high amounts of nutrient-rich foods, such as produce, fish, and

legumes, have been shown to contribute to improvement in symptoms of depression.

Another area psychologists are researching is the role of Omega-3 fatty acids on transmission of dopamine and serotonin in our brains. Diets with deficient levels of Omega-3 fatty acids have been linked to mental health problems.

Please speak with your primary care physician prior to making any significant changes to your diet.

If you are interested in reviewing your diet, please contact the Wellness Centre to schedule a session with our registered dietician.

The Christie Gardens Foundation: Let's Keep Moving

Recently we held our Spring Celebration — to honour our donors, celebrate the completion of Cedarvale Park, and to launch the Let's Keep Moving campaign — and what a celebration it was!

When we began this journey, our vision was to renovate the Courtyard Community at Christie Gardens — establishing three neighbourhoods on our care floor and in so doing, foster and accelerate the culture change already taking place throughout our community.

As the Foundation has become my focus, we have developed a mission that includes not only capital projects, but also education, influence, and benevolence — both inside Christie Gardens, and beyond.

Now as we look at our next capital project, Let's Keep Moving, we want to communicate to our donors and our community the opportunities for the Foundation to also keep moving. Our work is far from done.

We are very grateful to our donors for their support in achieving our ambitious fundraising goal to complete the Courtyard renovations.

Now we are looking ahead to the Fitness + Physio Centre at Christie Gardens, scholarships and bursaries, music programmes, community engagement, speaking engagements, and much more.

Thank you for your continued encouragement and support.

Grace Sweatman
President
The Christie Gardens Foundation



Heather Janes: Fitness + Physio Centre

It was my pleasure to announce the name of our new capital campaign at our Spring Celebration:



For us, the name has dual meanings: it speaks to our commitment to continue to focus on the work of our foundation; and it reaffirms our commitment as an organization to well-being.

More and more research studies are showing that physical activity is not only healthy for the body, but also for the mind. Exercise helps to combat stress, promotes sleep, and activates the immune system.

So for the future health benefit of our community I am announcing our new project to develop a 2,000 square foot Fitness + Physio Centre on our ground floor.

Some background:

- we currently run 15 classes per week on our lower level;
- our fitness program staff see over 100 residents for individual fitness and nutrition counselling; and
- our physiotherapy staff are actively treating over 200 clients on an ongoing basis.

I feel strongly that dedicating space and resources to these programs is critical; and where better than a prime location adjoining the front lobby and looking into the courtyard garden?

I hope that you continue to include The Christie Gardens Foundation in your plans for giving.

Heather Janes
CEO

