



EFR EMPLOYEE & FAMILY RESOURCES

# COOKING THE WAY TO WELLNESS



## COOKING OFFERS NUMEROUS WELLNESS BENEFITS. WHAT'S KEEPING YOU OUT OF THE KITCHEN?

Discover how you can nurture wellness for you and those around you, boost your mental health, and grow toward flourishing with something as simple as cooking!

We all know we cook for physical nourishment -- our bodies get hungry and need the caloric and nutrient boost. But how can cooking also provide mental nourishment to "feed" a tired mind?

Here are some ways cooking can boost your mental health in each dimension of wellness:

### PHYSICAL

It's important to know what is in your food and what you are consuming. What we eat affects how we physically feel -- if you eat junk food, it's common to feel fatigue, head- and stomach aches, and other physical

conditions that make us not feel good.

When we don't physically feel well, it's easier to mentally and emotionally feel unwell, too. Long-term, these unhealthy physical and emotional feelings can cause serious health conditions.

To boost nutrition in your diet, and therefore your mental health, try incorporating any of these [11 nutrient-dense foods](#) throughout your weekly meals. Also, try creating your meals from scratch so you can physically see what and how much you are putting into your body.

### EMOTIONAL

After a long and stressful day on the job, it can be difficult to find the motivation to cook. But intentionally choosing to be mindful of what and

how you prepare dinner can re-focus your brain and help you wind down after your day.

Be mindful of every sense -- observe the vibrant colors, smell and feel the different ingredients, listen to the sounds your food makes as you prepare it, and find joy in tasting your creation -- to slow and reframe your mind.

### FINANCIAL

American workers spend thousands of dollars dining out for lunch each year, rather than bringing lunch from home.

Meal-planning is a big time and budget saver. Not only do you save time with the back-and-forth to the grocery store, but planning and cooking your meals in advance

## MEAL-PLANNING APPS

Check out these [meal-planning apps](#) to save time and live healthier!



costs less than half, per meal, of what you'd be paying dining out. Fewer financial burdens equal less stress!

### **SOCIAL**

Cooking doesn't have to be a solo event! Preparing and cooking meals with a friend or family member is a great way to catch up with your support system. Sharing space in the kitchen also helps develop communication and physical awareness skills that can help you personally and professionally.

Moreover, take some time to cook a meal or treat for someone you care about. Whether it's the new neighbor across the street, an old friend, or a sick family member, people crave connection and belonging; when you help build that connection, you generate positivity and warmth.

### **SPIRITUAL**

Cooking can also impact spiritual wellness. Before each meal, take a moment to be grateful for your food --

that you can afford your meal, that the meal will satiate hunger and provide nutrients, and, hopefully, that you will enjoy the taste of the food. After your meal, reflect on what you did and didn't enjoy about your meal.

### **INTELLECTUAL**

Creativity gets your mind moving to learn and grow new skills. Have some fun in the kitchen with some new flavors, a new recipe, or new cooking equipment!

Not really sure how to break from routine? Try getting some inspiration from foodie channels on YouTube or by watching a fun cooking show on Netflix.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

Creating a pleasant and stimulating cooking environment creates motivation to get cooking; after all, if you don't like the space, why would you want to spend time in it? Aside from decor and cooking gadgetry, an inviting and functional element could be a countertop or window sill

"garden." Here are [25 foods you can re-grow](#) in your kitchen to add to a relaxing and stress-free environment.

### **OCCUPATIONAL**

One of the best days at work is when someone brings treats to the break room or for the team to share. Add to your workplace's culture by being the one to celebrate your colleagues and the work you're doing! Not only does sharing that appreciation make you feel good, but your co-workers are pretty happy, too!

Cooking provides many opportunities to feel and do good for those around you, promoting your overall wellness. But it can also be difficult to start taking steps toward wellness when life's challenges are getting in the way.

Your Employee Assistance Program can help with anything that creates stress and impacts your overall well-being. Call **800.327.4692** for 24/7, confidential counseling, legal and financial consultation, and more.

## WELLNESS

### *Unplug to Reheat Old Traditions*



With an abundance of recipes at our fingertips, it is not difficult to find something tasty to cook, bake, or grill.

Nowadays, most people find recipes online and bookmark or pin them to reference time and again. While this is very convenient, it creates a dependence on keeping an electronic device close by when cooking.

Perhaps consider starting a recipe book or recipe card box that includes your most favorite and commonly used recipes. Not only does this give you a reason to put your phone or tablet aside and enjoy cooking without distraction, it also leaves your family members and friends with handwritten recipes they can cherish for years to come.

While it appears there is no greater place than the worldwide web to find recipes, we all know some of the best come from the handwritten recipe cards passed down through generations.



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