

Living on WELL Street Blog: “Eat, Pray, Move!”

By Michael White, Worksite Wellness Technical Assistant, We Choose Health

An article that appeared in the Chicago Sun-Times in February of 2012, “A new approach to getting fit: prayer” (Sandy Thorn Clark, 2/29/12, link: <http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/health/10833709-423/the-power-of-faith.html>), made a lasting impression on me. The article described the evangelistic efforts of author and exercise physiologist, Jimmy Pena, to encourage people in the pews to “take care of the body that carries the soul.” Pena’s “Prayfit” program challenges Christians to “exercise” their faith, saying, “We are bold to declare faith can move a mountain, and yet doubt it can help us move a muscle.” Pena claims that living a healthy lifestyle is a means for praising God and that the “sacrifice” required in living healthy will be honored by God.

Pena recognizes a serious problem and is doing something about it. His message may be too focused on the pain and suffering involved in changing lifestyle behaviors, but he’s addressing an issue that few in the clergy are tackling. The benefits of living a healthy lifestyle offer hope and rewards, here-and-now, on our earthly journey. It should be a life-giving message preached in every place of worship. Our spiritual health, like our physical health, benefits from “preventive” care. I say, avoid the pain and suffering - live healthy!

The article inspired me to create a wellness activity for the workplace. It doesn’t preach fitness, but it does encourage health and wellbeing. I call it **EAT, PRAY, MOVE!** - a prescription to eat right, pray often, and *move more!* Some folks think that it sounds like a popular book and movie? It does, but one letter change and love takes a hike (or a walk)!

So, how does it work? We all know that proper nutrition and regular exercise contributor to good health. We also recognize that prayer, meditation or reflection promotes emotional and/or spiritual wellbeing. Combine all of these practices and you have a vitality-filled life! Share these practices with others and you can transform a family, a group of friends, a workplace, a place of worship, or an entire community.

EAT, PRAY, MOVE! suggests 3 simple daily goals:

1. Eat **5** servings of fruits/vegetables
2. Spend a minimum of **10** minutes in prayer, meditation or reflection
3. Purposefully move for a total of **20** minutes

The “**5-10-20**” approach lays a foundation for people to build and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Eating 5 servings of fruits and/or vegetables is not meant to be an addition to a person’s diet. Rather, it should replace less nutritious foods that a person typically consumes. **EAT, PRAY, MOVE!** does not recommend any particular way to pray, meditate or reflect. This is a personal and private matter. Individuals are encouraged to do or explore what is most comfortable for them. The focus is on the wellness benefits to be realized from the effort made. Finally, movement is meant to be “purposeful”. This means that it should be somewhat vigorous, with the intention of elevating one’s heart rate.

The spirit of **EAT, PRAY, MOVE!** is not to *measure* the amount of any one of these healthy behaviors. Instead, it is meant to help people integrate these practices into their daily lives. The 5-10-20 approach can be modified to fit the needs of an individual or a group. For instance, if someone rarely eats fruits or vegetables, eating “2” servings per day can be a more appropriate first step. Or, if someone is not accustomed to exercising, “10” minutes, rather than “20”, might be a more appropriate marker. The important thing is to establish a goal for each practice that is achievable by the majority of participants.

EAT, PRAY, MOVE! should encourage additional learning about living a healthy lifestyle. Resources are available online, on television, from the library, and from local community organizations (American Cancer

Society, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local health care providers) that offer quality information at little or no cost. Another valuable tool is the example of healthy lifestyle champions. The sharing of their stories will motivate and encourage others to make health and wellbeing a priority. Identify those champions in your community and in your workplace and engage them in helping with your wellness efforts.

Details of the **EAT, PRAY, *MOVE!*** activity can be found in the Health Promotion Activities (link: <http://wechoosehealth365.com/asp/Public/Page.aspx?pid=15548>) on the We Choose Health 365 website.

Live WELL!

Michael