Healthy Matters
A Publication for the OCCC Community

Remember to Take Care Of Yourself

With fall classes in full swing, some of you may already be feeling the effects of having so much to do with so little time in which to get it done. A natural tendency is for us to sacrifice ourselves in order to gain a few extra hours each day. While it is sometimes necessary to burn the midnight oil, it is certainly not healthy for us to do so on a continuous basis (it can actually lower our productivity).

There are certain things we must do in order to function as well as we can. The first is to make sure that we nourish our bodies with the right kind of foods. Many of us like to have our frou-frou coffee every morning, or we grab something quick from a vending machine when we’re pressed for time. However, these options often give us lots of sodium, fat, and calories without giving us much real nutrition to sustain our bodies’ needs. Make sure to also eat plenty of fruits and vegetables along with whole grains, protein, nuts, seeds, and dairy. These foods will help maintain your body and keep you mentally focused so that you can accomplish more.

Most of our planet is covered in water and most of our cells are comprised of it. With that said, it is vitally important that we drink enough to keep ourselves well hydrated every day. Dehydration can cause us to think we’re hungry when we’re actually thirsty, so we may overeat. It can also make us feel lethargic and foggy so that it’s harder to move through the day or focus on tasks. If you aren’t sure whether you are truly hungry or just thirsty, drink a small (8 ounce) glass of water and wait about 10 minutes. If you feel satisfied, you were thirsty. If you still feel hungry, then you are.

If you think it’s a waste of time to sleep every night, consider this: your body needs its full 7-9 hours of sleep every night in order to repair itself AND to properly store all of the new information you are deliberately trying to learn when you study. You’re investing a lot of time and money to take classes each semester. Help maximize your learning by getting the rest that your brain and body needs.

Help Students; Feel Good

On October 6, you can help provide scholarships for Nursing, PTA, and EMS students by participating in the 4th annual 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run. You can register for the 5K from now until October 4th for $22 ($17 for students with a valid OCCC ID). You can register for the 1 Mile Fun Run from now until October 4th for $15 ($12 for students with a valid ID). On October 5, the registration fees go up $3 in each category.

To register or for more information, visit the website at www.occc.edu/lifesaver. You may also call race director Deborah Myers at 682-1611, extension 7138, or race co-director Beverly Schaeffer at 682-1611, extension 7344.

You don’t run? Come out anyway and enjoy the day’s festivities. Direct donations are also appreciated and very helpful.
Choose a Career that Fits

Soon after you walk through our front doors, we hit you with one of the hardest questions you may have to answer for a while: What do you want to major in? A few of you might have put some thought and research into this question before coming to college, but many of you have not. You might have a vague idea about taking “some basics” and then deciding later. The fact is that the Oklahoma State Regents require only three “basic” courses for every degree. If you take English Composition I, U. S. history, and American Federal government during your first semester, then you have exhausted your required basics. Other courses, such as math and science, often depend on your major area of study.

It’s certainly okay to come to college without knowing exactly what you want to do for the rest of your life. After all, you probably have decades of work ahead of you. If you’re like most of us, you’re familiar with a handful of potential occupations and may have settled on one of them because your parents want you to work at a particular kind of job or because your friends tell you that you’d be good at that job or because you know the job pays “big bucks.” Those are not good ways of choosing a potential career or the major that corresponds with it.

One of the first things you will want to do is assess yourself to identify your strengths, your personality traits, and your passion for learning about and doing certain kinds of tasks. If you don’t know where to start, visit the Office of Student Employment and Career Services on campus. The staff there will help you get started on your search for the best fit for you.

The results of these self-assessments will lead you to certain job families that might be of interest to you. Your task now is to learn more about the jobs within each job family. Think about how much education you will have to have for specific jobs. Find out what the work environment is like. If possible, speak with people who work in those professions to identify what people like and dislike about them. In some cases, you might be allowed to shadow an employee or volunteer your time for a few hours to get a better sense of whether the job is right for you.

Once you have a better idea of what kinds of occupations you would enjoy, sit down with an academic advisor and discuss degree plans that will prepare you to do that job.

Having a goal to reach for will also help you be more successful in your classes. It’s easier to sit through a class and complete the required work when you can see how that set of knowledge and skills will benefit you in the future.

Know that it is okay to change your mind along the way. People often change majors during their college experience just as they often change careers during their lives. If you receive financial aid, though, be cautious about taking courses that may only apply to certain kinds of programs. New restrictions that went into place July 1, 2012, limit students to twelve full-time equivalent semesters. If you wait too long to get your focus and find your passion, you may have to pay out of pocket to finish your degree.
Boost Your Critical Thinking Skills

A Parable:
A crow, exhausted and dying of thirst, came upon a pitcher with water in the bottom; but when the crow put its beak in the mouth of the pitcher, he found that no matter how hard he tried, he could not reach far enough to drink. He tried for several minutes, almost giving up in despair.

But, continuing to think of other options, a creative thought came to him. He took a pebble and dropped it into the pitcher. He repeated the process, dropping in one pebble after another. At last, he saw the water level rising, and after casting in a few more pebbles, he was able to quench his thirst and save his life.

Thinking is a skill. We often operate at a very low level of thought because we are engaged in routine activities that don’t require us to solve problems or handle novel information. However, developing higher levels of thinking skills can be very important to our academic and life success. Critical thinking involves developing enough skill and knowledge to be able to view problems, and ultimately to solve them, in unique ways. Traditional classroom experiences teach us to view the world in dichotomies: right versus wrong, black versus white, legal versus illegal, etc. Real life, however, usually doesn’t present itself to us neatly packaged. This is especially true with people-related problems. It is up to us then to identify the best solution from a list that may contain many potential solutions. Sometimes, we may have to develop a solution because the problem is so unique.

Strong problem-solving skills require flexibility in our thinking that lets us step away from our typical way of viewing the world so that we can see it from different perspectives. This may be uncomfortable for some because it involves the risk of being wrong. Too often, we learn to fear being wrong because we’ve been humiliated or “corrected” in front of others. It’s important to remember that your education and your success belong to you and that you should do those things that help you achieve them.

One way to boost critical thinking is by talking to other people about a problem so that you can examine it from other perspectives. Some classes are designed to be collaborative and to support this kind of activity. In traditional classes, students can still form groups so that they can benefit from each other’s perspectives.

Reading is another good way to boost thinking skills, especially if you read with a healthy dose of skepticism. Just because something is in print or on the Internet doesn’t make it accurate. Explore multiple writings on a topic to help insure that you’re getting an accurate account.

Brain teasers and puzzles can also help build critical thinking skills. Again, some people tend to avoid these because they fear being wrong. However, being wrong is actually a good way to learn if you take the time to explore why you are wrong and to discover the logic that leads to the appropriate or desired answer. In time, you begin to develop that processing so that you become better at solving that type of problem.

Another helpful strategy is to work on case studies. These scenarios are designed to provide important information, extraneous or unnecessary information, and multiple possible outcomes so that individuals or groups of individuals can identify and make an argument for a particular solution. Often, assignments in your general education courses will require that you select a viewpoint and argue for or against it. Since there are no “right or wrong” answers, it is the strength of your logic and problem-solving skills that determines how well you do.

People who read and solve puzzles keep their brains active and flexible.
We all experience a little bit of anxiety when we have to take a test or make a presentation. Low levels of anxiety actually push us to be prepared and do our best. Higher levels, however, can interfere with our ability to function. If you experience some kind of performance anxiety, try these strategies for getting it under control:

1. Make sure you are well-prepared. Putting an appropriate amount of time into our preparation can help us feel more relaxed and confident.

2. Eat something light about an hour before the test or presentation. A combination of protein and complex carbohydrates will provide the most long-lasting relief.

3. Find a quiet place to meditate, practice deep-breathing exercises, or just go to a happy place in your mind.

4. Burn off excess adrenaline by engaging in a physical activity such as walking or swimming.

Mom’s Turkey Meatloaf
(serves 8)

3/4 cup quick-cooking oats
1/2 cup skim milk
1 medium onion, peeled
2 pounds ground turkey breast
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
2 eggs, beaten
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1/4 cup ketchup
1/2 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 8 ounce can tomato sauce

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

In a small bowl, stir together the oats and milk. Thinly slice 1/4 of the onion and set aside. Finely chop the remaining onion. In a large bowl, combine the turkey, oat mixture, chopped onion, bell pepper, eggs, Worcestershire sauce, ketchup, salt and pepper. Mix just until well combined.

Transfer the mixture to a 9x13 inch baking dish and shape into a loaf about 5 inches wide and 2 1/2 inches high. Pour the tomato sauce over the meatloaf and sprinkle with the sliced onions. Bake for about an hour or until and instant-read thermometer registers 160 degrees.

Remove from the oven and let rest for about 10 or 15 minutes before slicing.

Per serving:
207 calories
3 grams total fat
32 grams protein
13 grams total carbohydrates
5 grams sugar
2 grams fiber
98 milligrams cholesterol
489 milligrams sodium