Dr. Bern Melnyk
Welcome to the podcast entitled, Health and Wellness Briefs Tactics for a Better You. I'm Doctor Bern Melnyk, Vice President for Health Promotion and Chief Wellness Officer for The Ohio State University. This podcast series is brought to you by my CWO office and wonderful, Buckeye Wellness team. In order to provide you with evidence-based microlearning modules to optimize your health and well-being.

Our podcast starts by taking a dose of Vitamin G. Given that Vitamin G, or gratitude, is one of the simplest research-based strategies to improve mood, sleep and optimism and reduce stress and blood pressure. Please take a few seconds now to think about who, or what, you are grateful for today. Give a dose of Vitamin G to someone today for even more benefit.

Well, today I’m doing a special podcast for all nurses across the globe. I want to give a special shout out though, for our Buckeye nurses, who do an absolutely fantastic job of delivering evidence-based care in such a wonderful, caring, warm way. They are key to ensuring our healthcare systems, quality, safety and patient outcomes.

I want to start the podcast today by giving each and every one of you a huge dose of vitamin G! As a nurse, a nurse practitioner, a researcher, an expert in evidence-based practice and mental health, I really value every nurse that shows up every day to care for their patients and to care for each other.

Today though, I really want to talk about taking the time to prioritize your own self-care. When we get on an airplane and the oxygen masks drop, we are told to put them on ourselves first before we put them on our children. Nurses are great care providers, leaders, managers, educators, researchers, evidence-based practice mentors, but we also have so many other responsibilities. We give and give to everybody else, but we also do not prioritize our own self-care.

Self-care is not a nicety, it's a necessity because if we don't take good self-care, we cannot do a good job at taking care of the others. And I know what you're probably thinking. “Bern. That's easy for you to say, but you don't understand the demands in my life. You don't understand. I'm taking care of children. I'm taking care of an elderly parent.” You might be working 2 jobs, believe me, I can say I know how you feel because I have been there as well. But if we don't prioritize, just a little bit of time, to do what brings us joy or to engage in healthy lifestyle behaviors, 10, or 15 years from now, we are going to be struggling with our physical or our mental health.
Maybe today you're feeling burnt out, you're feeling stressed, you're feeling anxious, maybe a little depressed. It's OK to feel that way some days, but we need to face our true story. If we're really struggling with those things and get help. Getting help is not a weakness. Facing our true story is part of getting help. It again, it's a strength to recognize when we need help, not a weakness. But there are many things we can do, that are brief, to help us deal with stress and burnout, anxiety, and depression.

Sometimes we forget, just a few very big deep breaths throughout the day, using the 4-7-8 method can really help to decrease stress, bring down our blood pressure a little bit. And if you worry a lot about the future or you feel guilty a lot about the past, I want to encourage you, when you start to worry or feel guilty, to just focus on something in your present moment. Turn your head slowly to the left, move it slowly to the right. Find 5 things you can see. Four things you can hear. Three things you can feel. That mindfulness activity gets you to really break this wicked cycle of worry or guilt.

I also want to encourage you the next time you begin to feel yourself being stressed, depressed, or anxious, to stop and say to yourself, “What was just going through my mind? Is it helpful to be thinking these thoughts? Is it true? Do I have the evidence to back it up?” Because a lot of times the answer is no. So, if we can get in the habit of practicing for the next 66 days, how to catch, check and change our thinking we will feel so much better and have less stress.

So just as a reminder, if we want to cut our risk of chronic disease by 80%. If we can just take a few 10-minute breaks during the day, take a walk. Do some jumping jacks, turn on music we love and dance to get in 30 minutes of physical activity to eat 5 fruits and veggies a day, not smoke, and limit it to just one standard drink a day. Then everybody asked me, “How big can that drink be?” And I tell people, not the size of the alcoholic beverages, we get it in Vegas. Lastly, 7 hours minimum of sleep at night, and daily practice of some stress reduction techniques. Whatever works for you. Deep breathing, mindfulness, cognitive behavioral skills. Just get in the habit, even if it's a couple minutes a day to practice those helpful stress reduction strategies.

Finally, I need to ask you this question as I ask everybody. “If I could be your fairy god person in the next 2, 5, 7 years, what are you going to do if you know you cannot fail? What are you going do, if there is no failure, that is cultivating?” Getting back to dreaming big again. So many nurses lost their dreams, got burnt out through the pandemic. And research shows the key to happiness, according to the blue zones, is the ability to dream big. It's your purpose and your passion. And if you're aligned with your dreams, your purpose, and passions you'll never feel like you work a day in your life.

So, in nurses' week, again, I want to get the biggest dose of Vitamin G. Thank you for all you do every single day and never forget how much you matter! You matter so much and you're so valued. I want to encourage you to take good self-care. Prioritize your self-care. Again, Happy Nurses Week, and keep dreaming, discovering, and delivering.
Thank you all for listening to Health and Wellness Briefs. Tune into other podcasts in this series to learn more evidence-based tips for a healthier, happier, and better you.