

HEI HEI DEPEW: I want to thank you all for taking the time today to join us for a panel discussion on wellbeing. The EA recently wrapped up the priorities poll. And the top priority for the Employee Assembly, as determined by staff feedback, is employee health and wellbeing.

Staff are concerned about their physical wellbeing, their safety, and physical health. And staff also are concerned about their mental wellbeing. Staff are feeling under duress from increased workloads, understaffed departments, COVID related anxiety and stress. Respondents have provided feedback indicating the need for wellness focus programs, events, or efforts.

With this said, I am glad that the Employee Assembly in partnership with human-- Cornell human resources can provide today's wind down to winter break, a panel discussion on wellbeing. Today, we are joined by an esteemed panel of wellbeing experts-- Michelle Artibee, the Director of Workforce Wellbeing, Dr. Marta Guzmán, a counselor for Faculty Staff Assistance Program, Erin Horner, a registered dietitian, nutritionist for Cornell Wellness, and Ruth Merle-Doyle, the associate director for Cornell Wellness.

Together, they will share their thoughts and suggestions on how to integrate reflection, rest, and rejuvenation into the winter months. We'll begin today's panel discussion with opening remarks from Mary Opperman, Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer, followed by the panel discussion with our wellbeing experts.

And finally, during the final 15 minutes of today's program, we'll have a live Q&A. If you have any questions throughout the duration of this program, please submit via the Q&A segment of this webinar. And the EA executive vice chair, Michelle LoParco will try to get to as many of your questions as possible. With this said, I turn the floor over to Mary Opperman for opening remarks.

MARY OPPERMAN: Thank you, Hei Hei. And thank you to all of you who have joined today. I'm not going to spend much time. You hear from me far too often. Other than to again, thank the Employee Assembly for everything that they have done. And thank in advance the wonderful panel that they have put together, who I believe will share some great information with all of you.

My only comment in the wellbeing space is to continue to be kind to yourselves. Recognize that what worked on one day may not work on another day, or that with your best of intentions you may hit a slippery path. And that's just fine. We need to take care of ourselves in the best way we can.

And so, I thank all of you for staying with all this. It's been a long road. Certainly, starting in March, we didn't think 10 months later we would be where we are today. But we can begin to see glimmers of hope in 2021. So, with that, I'm going to turn it over-- thank you all again-- and turn it over to Michelle Artibee.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you to the Employee Assembly for sponsoring today's discussion, and to Mary for being such a strong champion of staff and their wellbeing. We're looking forward to answering some of the questions you submitted in advance. And as time allows the live Q&A later in the program.

And to supplement our answers, we'll be putting links in the chat throughout the hour. But before we dig into questions, I'd really like to set some context for our discussion. We are going to be very focused on personal, mental, and physical wellbeing during the winter months. And we recognize that the spectrum of your experiences at home and at work right now is huge.

This is a big topic for just one hour. And some of what we share may not resonate with you. And that's OK. We don't intend to diminish the complexity of anyone's experience at home or at work.

And while we won't be talking extensively about grief and loss, we recognize that a number of you have lost loved ones this year. It could be due to COVID or many other reasons. And navigating that during COVID has been very difficult. Our group does speak very candidly about mental health.

And we want you to know that if you're feeling sad, anxious, depressed-- that there's nothing inherently wrong about you. These feelings are very normal and can't be erased with just simplistic steps. Same with feeling exhausted and feeling a bit burned out. It's really important for us to talk openly about these things and to make sure that you're aware both of resources-- but that we also work together as an organization, within our teams, and in our individual relationships at work to adjust and make improvements that relate to our wellbeing in the workplace.

And in many ways, these conversations are an important part of our work surrounding anti-racism and belonging. Lastly, while this forum is called wind down to winter break, some of you are in jobs that require work during the winter break. Much of what we share is relevant regardless of when you take time off.

And if you've not figured out your time off plan yet for the next few months, please do. It's a really important part of taking care of yourself. So, with that said, let's get started with some reflections on the past 10 months as it pertains to wellbeing. Obviously, our community, and some communities, have been through a lot. I'd like to start with you, Ruth. What comes to mind when you reflect on 2020?

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: Well, the first thing that comes to mind, Michelle, is when I was a new mom. I was struggling with something in a moment. And another mom said, you know Ruth, sometimes the days are short, and the years are long. Sorry. The other way around. Sometimes the days feel long and the years feel short.

And I can't help but feel like that's what this pandemic has personally felt like. Professionally and personally-- some days just never seem to end. And the hits kept coming. And conversely, I had wonderful days, certainly, that lovingly lasted forever with my family, where there were lots of laughs and connectedness.

But here we are, in what seems like the blink of an eye for me, that we are at nine months in. I remember at the beginning wanting to find meaning. I remember knowing it was going to be hard. None of us have lived through a pandemic. But I couldn't imagine it would be easy.

And I thought there would be meaning in it all. And professionally, I see that with a lot of my clients, where even though they're facing challenges of which I can't even fathom-- but I know they're feeling challenges-- they're finding opportunities or seeking ways to find opportunities when it comes to taking care of themselves, like finding new exercise routines, or how to get groceries safely, or even how to just get started with self-care when they've never done it before.

But now during the pandemic is the right time. So, I think it's been just an interesting dance of opportunity and challenge. And the volumes of those things being dialed up or down for any person at any moment.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Ruth. And Marta, would you like to add to that?

MARTA GUZMÁN: Sure. I think that many of us have struggled with fatigue, high stress, isolation, collective grief, and trauma. I also feel that it is important to highlight that communities of color have been disproportionately affected by the current pandemic and that the pain of the black community has been particularly centered at some points.

However, because the world slowed down, so to speak, I think we've been able to take a closer look at the issues that we need to address as a society. And I think we've also had the opportunity to witness kindness, creative ways to cope. I've learned a quote from Mariame Kaba, who's a black activist that I think really captures the growth that has taken place during this year.

And she said, "Hope is a discipline." and I think that is something that we have been learning and continue to learn as the year goes on.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Marta. And I want to stick with you for just a moment and this next question. And these questions have been pulled together from the many that you submitted in advance through the survey. How might employees really prepare themselves and their families both mentally and physically for winter? So, with you, Marta-- preparing mentally-- what would you offer?

MARTA GUZMÁN: This is a great question. I think there's many things that we could do. And I'd like to kind of really focus ourselves on our inner workings, particularly as they pertain to inner

dialogue. Sometimes we're not fully aware of how we talk to ourselves. It just happens in the background.

So, I'd like to encourage people to increase their awareness around that. How do you talk to yourself? Are you being critical, disruptive? Is it helpful? Is it compassionate? And this question I really like, is your inner dialogue serving you? Does it serve you in any way?

So, I think the goal here is to observe your inner dynamic-- not necessarily to fix it or to react to it. The fact that you feel a certain way doesn't mean that you have to do something with it. But just observe. Slow down. One thing that I like to recommend-- and this is something that I have to practice myself, because it's not easy to do-- is taking things as they come.

Do not expect things to go well or to go poorly, because sometimes we get anxious and the assumption is that things are going to go badly. But rather, approach things with curiosity. Let's just see how it goes, so to speak. The other thing that I think is really, really key is practicing self-compassion. Again, easier said than done.

So, in a nutshell, you have to acknowledge that maybe you're feeling sad. Maybe you feel pain. Maybe you feel lonely. And that is OK, meaning that some of us feel that we punish ourselves when we don't feel good. Because we should be feeling good all the time. That is a myth.

That is a myth. All of these feelings are part of the human experience. So self-compassion is a skill that needs to be cultivated. Basically, I like to tell people, talk to yourself as you would talk to a friend or a loved one. We have a tendency to talk to ourselves in a way that is much harsher. So, the other piece that I wanted to share from a mental health standpoint is, expand your perspective.

Because one of the things that happens when people are too stressed or too anxious is that your perspective becomes pretty narrow. That is a function of anxiety. So rather than just focusing on all the challenging pieces of the winter, the year-- can you find any aspects that are enjoyable, peaceful. Perhaps making an effort to center those things at times, too, and to maintain them present, even if they feel small. It's about finding joy in the small things.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thank you, Marta. Ruth, what would you like to add to that from the physical wellbeing perspective?

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: Sure. So, this time of the year-- pandemic not included-- people seem to be uneasy as winter approaches. And it's for very valid reasons. Some people don't like to physically feel cold. Some people have never had positive or any experiences doing wintertime activities.

Or you may just feel like all your options are gone, because you're more of a warm weather person. And this year, it's a little bit different, because there are, seemingly, threads of fear and

dread and perhaps sadness. It's just a different tone, as I'm talking to people who are already uneasy, or maybe were never uneasy with winter, but now-- the pandemic winter.

It's like on Game of Thrones-- winter is coming. It was said eerily there. And I feel like that's what people are thinking. So, there are a couple of things. In terms of the physical dimension of wellbeing and wellness, there are some things that are always on the list that are healthy behaviors for self-care-- moving your body, eating healthy, managing your stress.

We like to call it mental wellness at Cornell wellness. And then perhaps sleeping. And there may be others on the list that you're seeing. But those are the same things that are on the list for managing stress, and for perhaps boosting your immune system. So, taking small steps to achieve those things and perhaps keeping it simple.

Just as simple as possible to maintain your wellbeing and your wellness. But from a fitness perspective in particular, I think people sometimes feel winter is the nothing part of all or nothing when it comes to activity. And it doesn't have to be that way. If you think of a professional athlete-- they have a preseason, and in season, a postseason, an off season.

And we don't have to be professional athletes to change our focus. It's called periodization. So, you might be an outdoor, always active person when it's warm and sunny. And instead of not doing anything and resenting that fact, you could change your focus entirely, perhaps, to not be outside if that's really not something you want to do.

You could focus on strength training and do group fitness classes through wellness, or Cornell fitness centers, or through Nike Training Club-- which is my favorite app right now from a fitness perspective. You could try On Mindfulness. There's nothing that could go wrong with trying On Mindfulness for a period of time to just keep you engaged.

And the evidence supporting mindfulness is complimentary, and sometimes the same as the benefits of physical activity. You could try winter activity, if you're willing. Much to Mary and Marta's point, this winter will be different than any other winter we've experienced. So why not try it on?

If you need equipment, you can use the outfitting center at outdoor education, which is amazing for the Cornell community. They provide sidewalk service. So, you don't have to go inside. And there's no contact. But you could get snowshoes, which makes winter walking easy, because you stay on top of the snow.

So, I think that there's lots of different ways that people could prepare themselves. But also, to Marta's point about, perhaps, having curiosity. I've been reading a lot about Scandinavian and Nordic life in the winter, where it's far darker, far colder, and sometimes far snowier than what we get. And there's just a difference in how they view those months.

They view the activities-- perhaps inside or outside of winter-- as just as important as the activities of summer. So being cozy inside, and perhaps bringing light to darkness by simply lighting candles or lighting your fireplace, and pausing at that moment can be really profound. And perhaps shifting your mindset-- finding the things that you do like about winter, instead of all that you hate.

And to Marta's point, listening to what that dialogue is like. Are you always wincing and blowing raspberries at winter? Or could you find something nice to say, and then see what happens once you're thinking that way?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Ruth. That was really beautiful. Erin, would you add anything to what Ruth shared about physical wellness?

ERIN HORNER: Absolutely. And I loved what you were talking about, Ruth, about embracing winter. I think that's one of the keys here, especially from a nutrition perspective. When we're talking about the uptick in COVID-19 cases, we've got cold and flu season upon us-- it's really, really essential to support your immune system and embrace what winter brings.

Winter brings coldness. It brings dryness. So, what does that mean for your physical body? It means you might be more dehydrated in the winter, despite not feeling like you're sweating. So, making sure that you're hydrated is really key. I mean, like Ruth said, keep it simple.

This doesn't have to be complicated. I mean, it could be as simple as having some herbal tea sitting on your desk when you're working. It brings warmth. It brings nutrition. It brings heat into your body, which is really essential. So other winter comfort foods-- you don't have to hate on the winter foods. They're delicious.

And they're so good for you, too. So, things like soups and stews are really great. Warming foods that involve a lot of vegetables, and leafy greens, and herbs and spices. It's not really the time to eat lots of green salad. If you think about snow on the ground, it's cold outside-- think about foods that you're craving, foods that bring warmth.

So, herbs and spices like cinnamon and clove, cardamom, peppers, turmeric, ginger, curries-- these all add flavor without adding a lot of sugar and salt. So that's one simple way that you can up level your cooking to support your immune system and bring some more warmth into your body. I'd also say watch out for excessive amounts of sugar laden foods and alcohol.

So, the holidays are upon us. Winter break is upon us. It's the darkest time of the year. We often crave things that help pick you up. So, there's a lot of holiday parties and cookie contests and things that may not be happening this year. Maybe your department or work group is getting together virtually.

But I know at wellness, we often have a cookie contest. And that's not happening this year. And I think of it as an opportunity to do something different. So, if normally I'd go to work and I'd

sample 12 different types of cookies and come home on a sugar high, maybe this year I'm going to make one type-- my absolute favorite and just enjoy that. So, there's opportunities in the chaos.

So, embrace those opportunities and embrace what winter brings. And vitamin D levels is another one. This is the time when your vitamin D levels might be at the lowest point of the year-- or excuse me, the highest point of the year, because we've just come off of summer. So, summertime-- we're outside. We have more skin showing to the sun.

Vitamin D levels are often at their peak now. So, they're going to start declining throughout the winter months. So, it's a good time to optimize those vitamin D levels to support your mood, support your immune system. And really, the bottom line here is start with the basics. So, clients often ask me, what supplements can I try? What can I do?

And I joke about this, but you might enjoy this-- is that no amount of turmeric tea or elderberry syrup is going to compensate for having coffee and cookies for breakfast. We need to enjoy the food we're eating. And we need to bring in those healthful foods. And really that's what's embracing winter looks like for me.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Erin. I want to pivot back to mental health. And many of us have been working at a fast pace for an extended period of time. And some of the research has shown that when we do that, and then we finally get some time away, that time away might not feel as peaceful as we might hope or expect, especially since how we would normally use that time might look a little bit different.

And this has been on my mind. And I've had so many people kind of raise this to me, especially since they felt like maybe the Thanksgiving holiday or long weekend did not bring the amount of rejuvenation that they were expecting from it. Marta, is it possible that the emotions of this year will catch up with us in some way? And if we find ourselves feeling very overwhelmed with that-- particularly over the winter break or time away-- what do we even do about that?

MARTA GUZMÁN: Great question. At the risk of scaring people, I'm going to say that it is very possible that difficult emotions will emerge when you are no longer in survival mode. That is how our psyche works. If you have to survive something-- get through it-- maybe you're not feeling-- you don't have the time to do that. So, when things slow down, yes.

It is likely that some unpleasant emotions might come up. And I say unpleasant in a very general way, because what I would like to do is encourage people to pay attention. Pay attention to how you're feeling. Trauma and exhaustion can emerge when things are supposed to slow down, and you're supposed to feel better.

So, pay attention. The other piece is-- and this is sometimes hard-- it's a hard sell for some people, but-- I like to think of emotions-- all of them-- as sources of information. One of the

things that we typically do is that, oh, I'm feeling sad. What do I do to feel happy? I feel anxious. What do I do to decrease my anxiety?

Nothing wrong with that. But at the same time, there are some pieces here that we should consider. Emotions offer you information. They give you information about what you need. They give you information about your environment. They give you information about what changes you should make. Again, the goal is to observe.

Avoid reacting. But pay attention. This might sound a little strange, but think of your emotions as friends. They come up and, OK, what do you need me to know, sadness? What do you need me to know, anger? Rather than trying to push them away, because that's when we run the risk of, they will come out one way or the other, whether we want it or not.

So, I guess my-- the main point here is pay attention. Pay attention to yourself. Pay attention to how you're feeling. And do not run away from them. Just ask them, what do you need me to know?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: And I can see, so many people are in roles at Cornell where they're caring for students. They're caring for animals. They're caring for others and are very motivated by that care that they're providing for each other. When-- and sometimes staying that busy and providing that care gives us an escape to not have to think about all the other things that we're thinking about and feeling.

And I've noticed that those who are in caregiving roles-- particularly when they get a break-- that a lot of this can emerge. So, Ruth and Erin, I was just wondering if either of you have anything that you wanted to add to this question.

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: Gosh, it's hard to follow what Marta said, because it was so beautiful. But I think that I would echo the listen with curiosity. I always use that term, actually, to what's resonating or what you're being told from within. There are many people mourning the loss of using the fitness centers and the pools on campus. They are not available to employees or spouses right now.

And I think it's a moment to reflect on, what is it that I'm missing most about that. Because I'm finding people are starting to mention things that have nothing to do with the physical aspect of exercise. If you were used to going to Teagle every morning, perhaps you're missing those people that you used to see every morning. Perhaps that was your social connectedness before the start of the workday.

Or maybe you're missing that moment alone that was just yours to exercise. Or maybe you had no idea that exercise was as good for your mental health as it was, now that it's gone. So certainly, reaching out to wellness-- if we can help that conversation for you. If you're just feeling like, yes, I am taking care of myself at home. I am exercising.

That's what I'm supposed to do. But it just doesn't resonate. It doesn't feel right. Something's off. We're here to help. We provide individual consultations to anyone in the Cornell community for free. They're confidential. They're virtual. And certainly, seeing any of the counselors at FSAP-- I don't want to plug FSAP before Marta does, because I'm sure she will-- but there are resources to help if you're feeling like something is just not right, whether it's from a physical or mental wellness perspective.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: OK. Erin, did you have anything that you wanted to add?

ERIN HORNER: Yeah. I think this is a really valid point and just last week I was talking to a client. And she told me the answer to this question. Isolation is finally getting to me after a period of relatively good adjustment. And I think that really sums it up. It's been nine months. And it's finally getting to her.

Things are finally coming and we're about to have a break-- some of us at least. And these emotions come up. And just echoing what Marta and Ruth were saying-- acknowledging those emotions instead of drinking them or eating them. So many times, we turn to other coping mechanisms, like over-consumption of food, eating a lot of sugary foods, mindless snacking, grazing, over-consumption of alcohol.

There're so many different ways that we can cope. And I just strongly encourage you to acknowledge those emotions and find other ways of coping that will go into physical activity, connectedness with friends. Even if it's virtual, you can meet with your family. You could meet with your friends. So, finding other ways to cope that are healthy and going to support your goals.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: And so many of the ways in which people support their health and wellbeing is by spending time with people they care about. And folks are navigating more issues related to isolation and loneliness right now. Ruth, I was wondering if you could tell us some of the ways in which your clients are addressing their isolation and loneliness throughout this time.

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: Sure. So, while there are a lot of people who have decided the safest way for them to take care of their physical bodies are in their homes, doing at home individualized workouts-- there are people that are wanting to connect, face to face, with other people.

And there are some things, certainly, to keep in mind. The research that we know to date will tell us that the safest way to exercise is either in your home or in a solitary way outside with a mask, and staying away from people. So, understanding that the baseline of safety is with a mask, staying at least six feet or more, not touching your face or mouth, especially if you're sweaty or itchy from exercise, and then washing your hands when you get home.

There could be ways to meet with people if that social connectedness is really important to you from a physical wellness exercise point of view. Aside from those kinds of baseline, what I

would suggest is first of all, have a conversation with your exercise buddy. Because I've been reading about how our bubbles are much bigger than we think that they are.

So, having a really candid conversation about, who have we all been around? What have we been doing lately? And if that person is not willing to have the conversation, then it might be worth trying to find someone who will. Thinking through where you're going-- the state parks this summer were just full of people.

And the one time my family and I went to Treman was just kind of an anxiety-provoking, non-very productive exercise moment. Because there were just too many people. So, although I would want everyone to be safe and know their surroundings, trying to find places that are a little less populated. And Ithacatrails.org-- I believe it is-- is a great website to find trails anywhere in the region.

And just kind of thinking through your general route. If you want to walk or run outside, always have your mask with you. Because you can predict that no one will be there and someone will end up showing up, because they have the same great idea as you. And you certainly need to protect yourself, as well as protect others.

If you were-- I go hiking. I go hiking with a friend on Sunday mornings very early [INAUDIBLE], before our families wake up. And we have an understanding. We wear masks the whole time. It's terribly hard at the stairs at Treman, but we make a deal to do that. And we don't really talk until the end of the hike.

We talk a little bit, but she's six feet ahead of me. And we do that on purpose. We're trying to be very safe. So perhaps, if you're going walking or running, deciding, we're going to do that activity. And then we're going to connect after-- distanced-- but we're going to connect while we're not moving. Or doing strength training together.

There are so many wonderful non-equipment based movements you can do six feet apart. And you can laugh and giggle and do your exercise routine when you and your buddy are being safe.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Ruth. We're getting a lot of things that have come in to just say walking has been people's saving grace throughout this time. That's been one of the most important ways to move your body and get some fresh air. I do want to share just a few Cornell specific ways that connection building is occurring across campus.

And maybe as I'm sharing them, Ruth, you can put a couple links in the chat with the resources that you just mentioned. So, Cornell Big Red Writes is a new university pen pal program that we've launched. We have 220 Cornellians right now. It's just a really neat way to cultivate a relationship with somebody you didn't know and might be in a different constituency, or even a different generation at Cornell.

So, I encourage you to check that out if you haven't already-- getting back to letter writing and stamps. The Cornell Global Mixers have started. They actually started with an alumni affairs and development, but have been expanded to include all Cornellians across the world. And hundreds of people are participating in each of their global mixers.

Their next one, I believe, is on December 28th. And then, a program that we have coming up is really about living home alone during winter break. It's a two-part program. One of the parts will be later this week. And the second part will be midwinter break. You don't have to participate in both. It's purely optional.

It's just a way to be able to build connection with others and to talk about the experience of living alone during this time. A lot of these things-- I think all of them, in fact-- have been included in the weekly-- excuse me-- the wellbeing update email that went out today and comes out every couple of weeks.

So, I want to come back to Marta for a moment. One of the questions that we received was around seasonal affective disorder. Can you help us understand a little bit more about that, and treatment options, Marta?

MARTA GUZMÁN: Sure. So just very quickly, we could talk about winter seasonal affective disorder for a long time. I also wanted to make the clarification that if you're like me, I came up here from the Caribbean. I didn't even-- I hadn't even seen snow before I moved up here. So, when you see your first winter, you're going to feel some type of way.

And there's nothing pathological about that. However, there are moments when the symptoms become such that they do disrupt life. It's helpful to understand that winter seasonal affective disorder has a complex etiology, meaning that the causes are not just one thing. It's not just, Oh, it's dark outside. But rather, there are genetic vulnerabilities, like family history of depression, low levels of serotonin-- which is a neurochemical that has to do with mood-- or vitamin D levels-- which Erin was mentioning earlier.

Your environment has a lot to do with it. Your personality type has to do with it. And some cultural factors also play into it. But the good news is that there are simple strategies that you can implement to cope with seasonal affective disorder, particularly as it pertains to the winter. So, one of the things-- and I think somebody mentioned that in the Q&A already-- is considering phototherapy-- meaning getting a lightbox.

They come different prices; whatever shape might fit your setting better. The key is that they tend to be more effective if you use them within the first hour of waking up for at least 30 minutes, because it helps the brain produce serotonin more effectively. Consider making any time off that you have-- whether that be 10 days or two hours-- consider making that time-- make it a time to replenish.

I think we all have a tendency to-- I have to clean the bathroom. I have to do this. I have to do that. But really, really re-prioritize. Because this year is not just any year. So, we have a lot more demands on our resources. Be proactive.

Learn to identify-- what are the red flags that things might be getting a little bit too difficult? Act soon. Finding coping strategies that work for you is essential. And I'm not going to be prescriptive and say, these are the things that you should be doing. But rather, I like to encourage you to find the things that offer you comfort.

Whether that's watching reality TV for some people, or reading a book for others, or taking a walk. Let's not judge what we do to take care of our wellbeing, but rather do something that actually offers you comfort. And listen, if you do all these things and you feel unable to cope and you're functioning declines, or you don't know what to do, seek professional help.

The good news is that depressive symptoms can be easily treated in therapy. Therapy has been shown to be as effective as medication. So, we have our faculty and staff assistance program, which I'm a part of. It's free, confidential services for Cornell staff, faculty, and their partners. So, it's something to consider.

It's very easy to access. You could shoot us an email or give us a call. So those are the thoughts that I have around that. And I'm happy to answer questions if there are any.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thank you, Marta. Erin, I want to hop over to you and talk about changing eating behaviors. Changing our eating behaviors can really feel difficult sometimes. And we know-- all of us being wellbeing professionals are very accustomed to people setting New Year's resolutions, and thinking about dramatic changes to their health and fitness behaviors in the new year.

From a nutritional perspective, can you give us some specific ways that tend to be a bit more successful at [INAUDIBLE] nutrition? And then, one of the questions that has come in that I thought we might just want to tie to it is, a request to see if you had any recipe suggestions.

ERIN HORNER: Yeah. You bet. Thanks, Michelle. So, the first thing that you mentioned about New Year's resolutions-- you don't have to wait until New Year's to change your eating behaviors. So, every single time we eat-- breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks-- every time you eat, you have an opportunity to do something different. You have an opportunity to support your health.

So, take that opportunity whenever you get it. So, doing one thing at a time is really helpful-- or focusing on one thing at a time. So, if you want to improve your health-- if you want to improve the health of your diet, you want to improve your nutrition-- start with one thing.

Don't pick five. Don't pick 10. Especially this time of year, with the holidays and a lot of things going on. Just choose one thing can be really, really helpful. So that one thing that I often focus

on with clients is vegetables. So, it sounds very simple and very basic. But it's profound in its effect.

So, if you focus on one thing and I encourage you to start with vegetables. So, what does that mean? So, first thing, how many are you eating a day-- really simply. So, two handfuls-- like this-- that's one serving of leafy greens. So, if you were going to have like a big green salad-- two handfuls-- one serving of leafy greens. Or one handful like this-- or half a cup-- would be a serving of cut vegetables or cooked vegetables.

So, you want to get at least five servings a day-- at least-- of non-starchy vegetables. So, I would not include corn or potatoes or sweet potatoes in that count. Try to go for the non-starchy vegetables and focus on that. So, the request for recipes. Really, any recipe that has lots of vegetables in it.

And this is not the time of year to eat a ton of raw vegetables. Yes, some raw vegetables are great. Coleslaws are wonderful this time of year. They incorporate local, seasonal foods like cabbages and carrots. But delicate, tender lettuces aren't growing in the ground this time of year. So, the hardier foods like beets, and carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squashes-- those are all going to be super nourishing to your body, as well as the spices and the herbs that I mentioned before.

So, if you focus on just one thing, I would say, start with your vegetable intake. And get as many in as you can. So, things like frittatas or omelets that have lots of different vegetables, lots of different colors-- can be really helpful. Stir fries. If you're thinking about desserts. Maybe you have a fruit crisp instead of a cookie. Maybe you make a yogurt parfait with fruit instead of the brownies.

There are so many different ways that you can just up level what you are going to have anyway. And soups and stews are an amazing way to do that. You can load them up with vegetable broths. Bone broths can be really nourishing if they're good quality. And lots and lots of vegetables in those. And that can be a really, really good place to start, if you're going to focus on just one thing.

And earlier, I also mentioned hydration. So, hydration-- you want to make sure that your body's hydrated. If you're start to get dehydrated, we actually have a very weak thirst mechanism. So, we often mistake cravings for sweets or snacking or grazing because we're actually thirsty. So, to make sure your body is hydrated. Have some water. Have some herbal tea. Seltzer water is OK as another water option. So, keep it simple. Start with making sure that the basics are covered before we jump into the more complex solutions.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Erin. And I know that you're a mom. You have a couple kiddos and have experienced the blend of momming and nutrition, right?

ERIN HORNER: Yes. I have three little boys. Yes.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: So, I just-- I want to pause for a second and talk about caregiving and relationships. Because as I'm hearing all of these-- as I'm listening to our questions and answers, there's that overlay of the other people that you live in your house with, or the people that you care about, and their feelings about winter, and their needs, and those types of things.

And I've worked with many parents this year that can only dream of being able to have the time that they wish that they had prior to the pandemic for doing certain types of activities. This has been a really hard year for working parents and other caregivers. And I just have to say, as we've been having this discussion, Ithaca City school district has announced that they're moving fully virtual for the remainder of this year.

And I can only imagine. I know parents who see that message-- and it's immediately on the text, on the email, making phone calls-- trying to figure out how they're going to go about juggling these things. And that's what it's been like since March. But even this fall, there have been a lot of changes.

Classrooms closed very suddenly for contacts and exposures. And that comes with a lot of stress. So, I really-- those of you that do not have any caregiving responsibilities right now, I just really encourage you to be thoughtful and keep being supportive and sensitive to the people that you work with that have caregiving responsibilities.

It's difficult to describe just how difficult this is right now. And if you're a caregiver and you're charged with protecting the health and safety of those in your household, doing that during a pandemic carries a certain physical toll, but also an emotional and a mental toll. And I think it's that element of it and the decision making that goes into navigating the pandemic and parenthood-- or elder caregiving-- that makes it incredibly complex.

So, I just want to speak to a couple different resources to make sure everybody's aware of them. We do have the hardship fund for school age child expenses. We'll put the link in the chat. I encourage you to apply very soon if this is something that you think you could use for your family circumstance.

And then, for those of you that have elder care or adult care responsibilities-- our work life team runs a support network. And the next meeting is this Thursday-- usually over the lunch hour. If you haven't reached out to work life to get any kind of support for elder and adult care, really encourage you to do so. Diane Bradac's our work life consultant, and she can help get you connected to resources.

The other thing is, I'm noticing that the pandemic is bringing a lot of people closer, but it's also creating divisions in families-- different attitudes about how to handle the pandemic, what safety guidelines to follow-- just a lot of difficulty in that space. Or families that had disconnection and are really mourning that, particularly during the pandemic. One book that I've personally-- that has resonated for me and is by a Cornell professor, Karl Pillemer.

It's called Fault Lines-- Fractured Families and How to Mend Them. And I just put that out there because I think that that content is relevant to a fair number of individuals. And then, the last thing I would just say about relationships is that we do know that there has been an increase in domestic violence outreaches to local advocacy center shelters and resources. And want you to know that if you feel unsafe in your relationship, help is available.

Please, again, check out the wellbeing update. We remind everyone of the crisis resources that are available. One of those resources that's available to you-- even over the winter break-- is ENI confidential counseling. This is an organization that Cornell contracts with to provide 24/7 mental health care. We'll put the phone number in the chat, but it is 1-800-327-2255.

And we'll put the link in the chat, as well. All benefits eligible employees and their family members get three free appointments. So, don't hesitate to use that resource, in addition to other local, statewide, and national resources that are available. And I encourage you to lean on each other. Don't suffer through this alone. Call a friend. Call a colleague.

And more than anything, find ways to volunteer and get involved. I know that that is something that is really important to helping me through difficult times, and helps kind of pull me out of my own narrow thinking about anxiety and stress. So, with that, we are a quarter to 1. I'd like to turn this over to Michelle LoParco to facilitate some additional Q&A from what's come in live.

MICHELLE LOPARCO: Thank you, Michelle, and the rest of the panelists for a very informative discussion on how we can stay healthy and safe during this holiday season. Some folks are interested in a lot of tips for how to stay safe walking in the winter. I know Ruth made a recommendation for snowshoeing and stuff like that.

But I think that some people this is-- winter is new to them. So maybe you have some recommendations for how they can stay safe outdoors on ice, et cetera.

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: Sure. Absolutely. One thing I didn't disclose is I am a ridiculous winter lover. Kind of-- I keep giving culture references-- like Lorelai on Gilmore Girls. I feel like I can smell the snow when it's coming, and my whole house gets very giddy. Now, that said, there are some days I don't walk outside. I tend to walk or run whenever I can.

But if it is icy-- I took a very terrible fall a couple of years ago and had a lot of issues from that. So, there may be occasions where you cannot walk outside safely. To mitigate that though, there are some products. One of them is called Yaktrax. It's kind of like-- I don't know how to describe it-- a scaffolding you can put on the outside of your shoes or your hiking boots that grip snow.

It's like chains on a tire. I have to say-- and I'm sure there are other brands other than Yaktrax-- but when I've tried them, they actually hurt my feet from like the outside in. So, they're not always a great option. But yes, you can still-- aside from ice and hazards of falling-- you can very

safely run or walk or hike outside in the winter. It's normally in the summer, people's running times like ramp up. Mine ramps way down. I run and walk far more when it's cold than when it's warm. And that's OK.

MICHELLE LOPARCO: Great. Thanks. We have a question from Ellen Miller. She says that she's sad that she won't be able to see family for this Christmas. But in response, she's found herself taking a little bit more risk in her personal life-- shopping and dining more, and justifying them as saying, she has-- no longer has to protect anyone. As someone who has been taking the precautions in isolation very strictly since March, I'm now finding it really difficult, midset, to break. What do you recommend?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Does anyone want to jump in on that? Ruth?

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: I'm happy to just-- I always have impulsive, empathetic thoughts when people ask me questions that may or may not be in my wheelhouse. So, Marta, please feel free to jump in here. But I think really asking yourself, in this moment-- knowing all that I know to be true-- in Ellen's case, I won't be visiting family. I may not have to protect people.

What am I wanting? Now, that said, even though, Ellen, you're not visiting your family in close proximity, there are probably other people in your circle or your community. And I firmly believe my mask protects. Your mask protects me. So, I think that pondering the risk that you're not only taking personally, but on a community level, would be an interesting thing to ponder.

MARTA GUZMÁN: I'd just like to add, very briefly-- I think this sense of, I'm not doing the things that I need to do-- probably comes from depletion and fatigue. It is not an indicator of who you are as a person, the quality of human being that you are. It's just an indication that you're tired.

We're all tired. So, you have to put that into context and see yourself with compassion. One of the pieces that I'd like to also talk about-- and this is something that I've been thinking a lot, too, because I can't travel either-- is, do not confuse your loneliness with confirmation that you are unworthy or unloved.

You have to really make that clear. Reach out to people. Share your feelings, even if it's through text or Zoom or whatever. That can be quite helpful, even if the contact is not for a long period of time. My guess is that if you replenish some of your resources, you will be able to get back to those behaviors that you were doing before. But you have to find a way to replenish. Because again, I think this comes from fatigue and depletion.

MARY OPPERMAN: So, this is Mary. Can I just jump in and say, Ellen, that was really brave. Thank you for-- because you're not the only one that's feeling that way. As someone who, this week, we made the final decision that my son's family is not coming to visit, which means I'm going on over six months. He has a brand-new baby I still haven't met.

So, I had the exact same feeling. Why have I been doing all this? This was the most important thing to me. And I just want to say that it was really brave of you to write that. And thanks for the good advice. I'm going to take Marta and Ruth said to heart.

MICHELLE LOPARCO: Great. I think some folks are looking for some suggestions on family get-togethers that won't be happening and other things that they can do. There's the winter solstice, and the change towards more daylight. I'm trying to fold a few of these questions into one, and how we can get to most everyone.

So, I think we're looking for some suggestions on alternative ways to get together with loved ones. Some folks that are elderly might not be as Zoom savvy as we all are now. But if you have any recommendations for that. And then, how to celebrate this turn towards more daylight.

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Well, I think, for me, I have a 21-year-old daughter and her young adult lack of real appreciation for the seriousness of COVID has created some tensions for our family, and has impacted our holiday gatherings in a way that's very difficult. And so, we're navigating that and trying to figure out how do we maintain some of our traditions that feel good to us without sacrificing our health and safety.

And it's challenging to hold firm, sometimes, to what you know is best and appropriate when family members are feeling hurt or rejected or any of those feelings. And I just want to give a shout out to those that are navigating that. And you're having to find creative ways to maintain that connection.

I know I will be reading her the Night Before Christmas via FaceTime on Christmas Eve as a part of our annual tradition. There are lots of different ways-- and of course, a quick Google search will also bring you a lot of things. One of the things that's been really nice about this is that older generations have become more familiar with the technology that's available.

And things have become a little bit more simple. So maybe there's ways to even practice those tools, so that come that holiday you could still enjoy a visual of some kind. I do know some families that are creating meal kits and each family is preparing that same meal that day, but in different households.

And they're enjoying that. I think there's a lot of different approaches that one can take. It's just being willing to treat it differently and not just mourn. Mourning's important-- but not to stay too focused in the what isn't. But really move toward what it can be. Would anyone like to add to that, because I don't feel like I gave a lot of examples?

RUTH MERLE-DOYLE: I'm happy to jump in. I did see Bridget's question about the winter solstice coming up and what activities could happen. Again, winter lover, so if you're not, I apologize. But-- and also repeating myself about the Scandinavian kind of way of life, of continuing to get out when it's cold. In fact, I don't know how to pronounce them, but there is both-- there are a

few Nordic, Scandinavian language words that really reflect the benefit of being out when it's cold.

And it's not that everyone from that part of the world loves going out into the cold weather. But they see the benefit once they've done it. There's this feeling of invigoration, this feeling of being energized, being clear of thought. There's an article called, something about the Dutch cure for stress is getting out on a cold, windy day.

And if anyone wants it, just email me. It'll take me a moment to find it. But I think that there are options to be outside. And not only that, perhaps if you're not one who wants to be outside on the winter solstice, look up *hygge*-- which is spelled H-Y-G-G-E or *koselig*-- K-O-S-E-L-I-G. It's two different Scandinavian countries and their concepts for coziness that time of the year. So perhaps celebrating light, but from the inside, with candles and with moments of mindfulness and pause, in addition to perhaps taking that cold walk or cold stroll or roll outside.

MICHELLE LOPARCO: Great. We're going to wrap up with a question from Patricia Driscoll. And she was wondering if there's recommendations for folks who lose their appetite during stress and tend to lose too much weight.

ERIN HORNER: I think we see both. We see that. We see people who experience stress and who lose weight. And then we see the people who experience stress and who tend to find-- try to find ways to manage their stress through eating. So, I think this question is often underappreciated-- but the loss of the appetite due to stress.

So, one of the things that we want to do is, we try to eat when we're hungry and stop when we're full. So, when you're not hungry, it can be counter-intuitive to eat anyway. But I think one of the cues is, if you find that you are losing weight, you lost your appetite-- you don't have an appetite-- liquids can be really helpful. So, smoothies, soups-- things that have a lot of nutritive value, but are liquid.

That can be really helpful, because it's not going to fill you up. It's not going to make you feel super full. And also, just smaller frequent meals, especially meals that have higher fat content. So fat content from foods that are really healthful-- things like roasted nuts, or one of my personal favorite snacks is tamari-roasted pepitas. So little pumpkin seeds. Super delicious. Very, very potent nutrition.

Nuts and seeds. Greek yogurt. Things that are going to provide a lot of nutritive value, that are going to help keep you full but not over full-- fill you-- I think is going to be really, really important to help with the weight loss, if you are experiencing stress and a loss of appetite. Just smaller frequent meals and eating nutrient dense foods-- calorie dense foods.

HEI HEI DEPEW: Thank you. I think this has been a very helpful, informative, and timely discussion. I want to thank Mary Opperman for joining us today. Our esteemed panelists,

Michelle Artibee, Erin, Ruth, Dr. Guzmán for their time, our executive chair, Michelle LoParco for moderating the Q&A, Matt Gorney and Kenny Christianson for providing CIT services.

And I want to thank our audience for tuning in. The recording of this panel discussion will be made available online soon. The Employee Assembly will be reviewing all the feedback from the priorities poll. Then we'll use this information to better inform the work that we do. Feel free to get in touch with the Employee Assembly. Provide feedback and suggestions for future staff forums or panel discussions.

Finally, I want to wish you all a happy holiday season. Enjoy the upcoming break and take care of yourselves. We will close this out with a poem reading from Michelle Artibee Michelle?

MICHELLE ARTIBEE: Thanks, Hei Hei, and thank you all, again, for participating. I also want to thank all my colleagues in wellness work life and FSAP areas. While it may look like all of this just comes naturally to us and it's easy, we fight the similar internal struggles, and have had a challenging year. And I just want to express some appreciation to them, along with all Cornell employees for everything that you've done this year.

So, this poem is not one that I have authored. But it is one of my favorites by Albert Camus-- he's a French philosopher, author, and journalist. And he won the Nobel Prize in literature at the age of 44. "My dear, in the midst of strife I found there was, within me, an invincible love. In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile. In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm. And in the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there is something stronger." Thank you all for participating today. Be well and stay healthy.