

STATE OF WISCONSIN

WELLNESS NEWS

February 2026

The Joy of Creating: Why Hobbies are Essential for Well-being

In the rush of daily responsibilities, we often view hobbies as “extra”, something we’ll get to only when the real work is done. However, engaging in a creative outlet isn’t just a way to kill time; it’s a vital component of a healthy, balanced life.

WHY CREATIVITY MATTERS

You don’t need to be an artist to reap the benefits of a creative hobby. The simple act of making, doing, or exploring provides several key benefits:



- **Stress Reduction:** Engaging in activities that make you happy promotes better mental health, improves relationships, and lowers cortisol levels.
- **The “Flow State”:** When you get in the zone, you experience a state of complete immersion and focus, known as flow state. This “Flow State” quiets the mind and provides a much-needed break from digital fatigue.
- **Confidence and Mastery:** Learning a new skill, like a difficult guitar chord or a complex knitting pattern, builds self-efficacy that spills over into your personal and professional life.
- **Emotional Processing:** Sometimes, we don’t have the words to express how we feel. Creative outlets like journaling, painting, or even gardening offer a safe space to express emotions and decompress.

FINDING YOUR CREATIVE OUTLET

Finding a hobby shouldn’t feel like another chore on your to-do list. If you aren’t sure where to start, try these three approaches:

- **Prioritize Play Over Product:** Focus on the process, not the result. If you enjoy the feeling of painting on canvas, it doesn’t matter if the final piece stays in a drawer.
- **Audit Your Free Time:** Notice when you feel the most energized. Do you feel better after working with your hands or after a mental challenge like a puzzle? Use that as your compass.
- **Start Small:** You don’t need a dedicated studio or fancy equipment. A 10-minute doodle session or trying one new recipe a week is enough to spark the benefits of creativity.

The most important thing to remember is that a hobby is for you. It doesn’t have to be a side hustle, it doesn’t have to be shared on social media, and you don’t even have to be good at it. Give yourself permission to be a beginner again and enjoy the benefits!

Well Wisconsin Events

FEBRUARY 2025

February is American Heart Month. Take charge of your heart health by registering for your annual biometric screening. Knowing your numbers, including heart health measures like blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose, is an important way to stay on top of your health. It also gets you one step closer to completing your 2026 Well Wisconsin incentive.

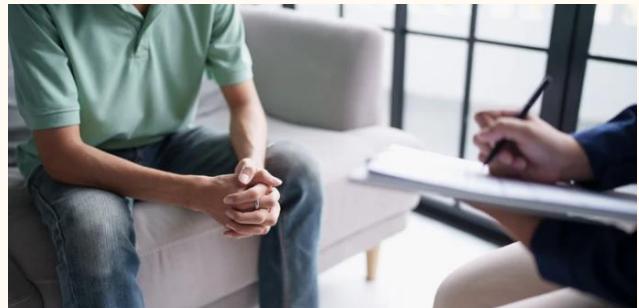
Can't find an on-site location near you? No problem - you can also complete your health check requirement by submitting a health care provider form or requesting the self-collection kit via the [Well Wisconsin portal](#).

Beyond screenings, [Well Wisconsin is hosting several opportunities this month](#) to help you build heart-healthy habits. Sign up for the Stress and Heart Health webinar, drop into a virtual fitness class, or register for the upcoming book club!

EAP Corner

EAP SPOTLIGHT: COUNSELING FOR YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Most people know that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers counseling, but this month we want to highlight exactly how this benefit supports state employees and their household members. Whether you're dealing with daily stress, navigating relationships, or a major life transition, the EAP provides professional, confidential support at no cost to you.



The Essentials:

- **Generous Coverage:** Access eight free sessions, per issue per year, for you and every member of your household.
- **Expert Guidance:** Connect with master's level counselors who specialize in short-term support.
- **Flexible Options:** Choose the format that works for you. Counseling sessions can be conducted in person, by phone, or virtually.
- **Easy Access:** Get connected by calling the EAP at 833-539-7285, using the Acentra Connect mobile app, or by [visiting the web portal](#).

Whether you are feeling overwhelmed or need a professional to talk to, the EAP is designed to help you navigate life's hurdles before they become major obstacles.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE EAP](#)

Elevate Wisconsin®: The Course to Financial Security

CONQUER TAX SEASON! PREPARE YOURSELF

Dreading the annual scramble to file your taxes? This year, be in control!

Through Elevate Wisconsin®: Your course to Financial Security, you have access to the [Filing Your Taxes comprehensive online course](#) designed to help you prepare ahead of time and navigate tax season with confidence.

Whether you're a seasoned tax-filer or just starting out, this course is for you. We'll break down everything you need to know, including:

- Important terms to know when filing taxes
- What forms may be sent to you
- How to identify your taxable income
- How your taxable income bracket affects your tax rate
- The difference between the standard deduction and itemizing
- What to avoid when filing your taxes
- Tax forms that you'll need to fill out when filing
- What to expect after filing your taxes
- & more!

Best of all, you can save your progress as you go. Work on what you have time for now and finish up (or come back to review) later.

Supported by the [Governor's Council on Financial Literacy and Capability](#) and the [Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions \(DFI\)](#), Elevate Wisconsin® provides trustworthy, unbiased content that does not try to sell products or services. All State of Wisconsin employees and their families can access this free benefit 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you have questions, please contact the DFI Office of Financial Literacy Director David Mancl at David.Mancl@dfi.wisconsin.gov.



with  **ELEVATE**
WISCONSIN

Monthly Mental Health Boost

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS MONTH

February is Random Acts of Kindness Month. Let's lean into the power of small actions that create big ripples. [The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#) offers a [free, year-long calendar](#) filled with simple, feel-good ideas you can try each day. Follow along this month and consider carrying kindness forward all year long. A smile, a note of encouragement, or a small act of generosity can help create more connection, compassion, and positivity both at work and beyond.





#WEARREDANDGIVE

EVERY HEART TELLS A STORY. EVERY WOMAN DESERVES A CHANCE.

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women. Together, we're changing this and rewriting the future of women's heart health.

**NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY IS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6
ARE YOU IN?**



State of Wisconsin Employee Wellness Webinars

Please join us for an upcoming webinar with one of our trusted well-being partners.

Click each title to view course details and to register.

| ATE | TIME | EVENT | HOST |
|----------------|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| Ongoing | On-Demand | Well Wisconsin Radio Podcasts | Well Wisconsin |
| Ongoing | On-Demand | Well Wisconsin Recorded Webinars | Well Wisconsin |
| Ongoing | On-Demand | Group Fitness Classes | Well Wisconsin |
| Ongoing | On-Demand | EAP Recorded Webinars | EAP |
| Every Tuesday | 11:40am – 12:00pm | Weekly Mindfulness Practice with Dan Tyler | Enterprise Wellness |
| Every Thursday | 11:00am – 11:40am | Weekly Mindfulness Practice with Dan Tyler | Enterprise Wellness |
| Varies | | February Well Wisconsin Events | Well Wisconsin |
| February 4 | 12:00pm-12:45pm | Getting to Know Your EAP | EAP |
| February 4 | 2:00pm-2:30pm | Explore Elevate Wisconsin: Platform Demo with New Enhancements (Financial Well-being) | DFI |
| February 5 | 10:00am-10:30am | Explore Elevate Wisconsin: Platform Demo with New Enhancements (Financial Well-being) | DFI |
| February 9 | 11:00am-11:45am | Getting to Know Your EAP for Managers | EAP |
| February 11 | 11:00am-12:00pm | 2026 Well-being Series for Leaders: B4 Stage 4 | Enterprise Wellness |
| February 11 | 12:30pm-1:30pm | The Power of Kindness in Trying Times | EAP |
| February 17 | 11:00am-11:45am | Getting to Know Your EAP | EAP |
| February 19 | 11:00am-12:00pm | Personal Finance Bootcamp – Session #2 | EAP |
| February 24 | 11:00am-12:00pm | Stress Management for High Burnout Professions | EAP |
| February 24 | 2:30pm-3:15pm | Getting to Know Your EAP for Managers | EAP |
| Varies | | March Well Wisconsin Events | Well Wisconsin |
| March 5 | 9:00am-9:45am | Getting to Know Your EAP | EAP |
| March 10 | 10:00am-10:45am | Getting to know Your EAP for Managers | EAP |
| March 11 | 12:30pm-1:30pm | How to Communicate Effectively | EAP |
| March 19 | 11:00am-12:00pm | Personal Finance Bootcamp – Session #3 | EAP |
| March 24 | 11:00am-12:00pm | Healthy Kids | EAP |
| March 25 | 1:00pm-2:00pm | Mindfulness for Stress Relief | Enterprise Wellness |

February Health Observances

AMERICAN HEART MONTH
AMD AND LOW VISION AWARENESS MONTH
NATIONAL CANCER PREVENTION MONTH
NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Stay informed! Receive this newsletter, resources, and learning opportunities directly by joining our mailing list. Email wellness@wisconsin.gov to sign up.

Newsletter produced by the Bureau of Equity and Inclusion for State of WI employees.