

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information that you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host and my guests today are Natalie Knutson, the director of wellness at Lake Region Healthcare and Jason Bergstrand with Partnership for Health. Good morning and thanks for joining me.

JasonBergstrand: Good morning.

Natalie Knutson: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: We are looking forward to November's Living Well series, which will feature the two of you as speakers and talking about staying positive and mentally healthy through the holidays, which I almost hate to admit that we're at that point, talking about the holidays. But a lot of this presentation is based on the work of THRIVE, which is a community initiative that I think we should remind our listeners about before we talk specifically about this session. So let's start with that. What is THRIVE all about?

Natalie Knutson: Well, I think the foundation of THRIVE is creating health and wellbeing through happiness and meaning. And what kind of tools do we use to do that? And when we talk about THRIVE and what those tools are, you'll kind of laugh because really we're telling them to just be nice to each other. But there's a lot of research behind them and they create a really good foundation for living, flourishing each and every day.

Katie Johnson: They really are simple concepts, right? Like we shouldn't have to be told some of these things. But life gets pretty complex and it's easy to forget some of those simple things.

JasonBergstrand: They are. We are busy people and we do forget to stop in our day, do little random acts of kindness or express our gratitude to folks. And those things are really key. There's wonderful research around that that definitely shows us that we can get a boost of wellbeing. And that helps us be able to bounce back in times when we need an extra boost.

Katie Johnson: And that's one of the things that I really love about what I've learned about THRIVE is how evidence based it is. This isn't just because it feels good. There's a lot of science and research behind this.

Natalie Knutson: Yeah, I mean we take a look at, like Jason said, writing letters of gratitude. You know, there can be a boost of up to six months worth of happiness behind writing it, behind the happiness the receiver gets when the receiver gets it. The three good things, that's just a simple thing you do each and every night for two weeks and you get that boost behind you. And some physicians are even starting to incorporate that into their practice before providing a low dose. They encourage folks to just give this a try first and see if just that daily reflection.

Because what they find is it becomes a habit. We start looking for those things and looking for those opportunities.

JasonBergstrand: And this information is really based on positive psychology, and it's so easy in our society to think about the negative. The negative is all around us, whether it's in the media or just people we bump into at work or in the community. It's so easy to dwell on the negative. And what this does is puts you on a good foundation of thinking positively and then creating these as skills in your life.

Katie Johnson: Right. I have to reflect that I introduced this topic negatively, right? I said, "Oh, I hate to even think that it's going to be the holidays." Like look at that. Here I am dreading it already. I need to shift my perspective.

JasonBergstrand: And interesting enough, one of the concepts is leaning into stress rather than avoiding stress. And so, part of what we encourage folks to do is to look at what that is and see the silver lining in it, rather than seeing all the negative parts of it.

Katie Johnson: It's so powerful. So let's talk about this session. It will be held on Tuesday, next Tuesday, November 5th at the Fergus Falls Public Library in their beautiful new conference room. We're really excited to have our Living Well series being held there the first Tuesday of every month.

And the topic again is staying positive and mentally healthy through the holidays. So let's give our listeners maybe just a sneak peek. Hopefully they can come and really deep dive into this stuff. But if they can't, a sneak peek into some of the principles that you are going to help share and give people tools for how they can really lean into the holidays and get the most out of them and enjoy them. What would you say are maybe some of the top tools?

Natalie Knutson: Okay. I think as we navigate through some of the tools, one of the common themes you find is the social connections, and just how practicing some of these things brings us together and kind of makes us realize we have a web of connections. And during the holidays it's easy to isolate yourself. But then there's also those people that just don't have anybody to lean on. And so trying to educate people on the facts behind loneliness and some of the things that that can lead to, but then also identifying the positive events that you might be attending and some of the positive social groups. And then being okay if you're peopled out, if you're an introvert and you end up kind of feeling people out and stressed out, that it's okay to say no and take a step back too.

JasonBergstrand: Yeah, that kind of goes to the theme of self care. You know, making sure that we recognize that the holidays can be a busy time, obviously. And a lot of demands are on us, but we need to prioritize our time, and it's okay to say no. And so, looking at what's most meaningful to you at the time, participating where you can. And as Natalie mentioned, social connections is the number one element that leads to longterm wellness. And so you want to be socially

connected as much as you possibly can, but at times you may need to draw back too on some of the activities that you're doing.

Katie Johnson: Yeah. Finding that balance can be tricky. And I do think it's really important to talk about that loneliness. You know, everything you hear in the holiday advertising is about the holiday gatherings and the party and the happy and the merry and the ho, ho, ho. And there are a lot of people that don't feel that way during the holidays and they're lonely. They want to withdraw. They don't want to admit that they aren't feeling happy and merry. And giving people tools to be able to cope with that and to realize that the sense of community is so important to their health.

JasonBergstrand: Yeah. And I identify with that. Early in my wife and as married lives, we spent a lot of time with our in-laws and we don't do that anymore. Just different life circumstances have kind of caused us to kind of go our own ways. And it's a new norm and we have to deal with that. And we're one that just doesn't have a lot of family in our area. We don't have any relatives in the Fergus Falls area. So, you have to recognize those things and you can deal with them best you can.

Katie Johnson: We talked about how busy the holidays are and how organization, prioritization I think, were some of the words that you used and maybe the small bites taking. How do you eat an elephant, right? One small bite at a time is how we could approach the holidays. You have some tools for that too.

Natalie Knutson: Yeah, I think we'll touch on that definitely. And that just reminds me of this gal that attended our workshop last year and she was so concerned about the amount of Christmas cards that she needed to get out in time. And what if certain people didn't receive it? Or what if she just decided not to do it altogether?

So I think that's a good example of prioritizing. I mean, if you're going to be preparing multiple meals and entertaining and hosting and feeling the pressure to get your house clean, get it all set, get it just so, I think just realizing that a lot of those little details sometimes go unnoticed, so not to stress. And if you decide you're not going to do holiday cards or maybe you're going to scale back, I think it'll be okay. So those are just some of the things we'll kind of tap into back to that prioritization piece.

Katie Johnson: Right, measuring how much do they contribute to your joy and happiness versus away from it? Any other thoughts? I know resiliency is kind of a big underlying theme of THRIVE in general and probably is a goal of this session overall to be resilient, to lean in. And I really like that theme as I think about myself entering the holiday season.

JasonBergstrand: Yeah, well, I guess in closing it's just an important concept for all of us to learn. And they are tools and so you need to practice them and as you do, they become easier. You'll start to see the daily benefits of them and you'll want to

do with them even more. And we would just encourage folks who come out and give it a try.

Katie Johnson: Right. And I believe you'll have some actual take home things they can bring home with them to help them put these tools to use and some good food as usual.

Natalie Knutson: Yeah, absolutely. Always some good healthy snacks to be provided there. And I just think people are going to go away from this with just that foundation and the strength to move forward and be able to, like we said, say no if you need to. And finding that positive outlook in each and every day just allows you to feel a little bit more empowered to get through some of those tough situations.

Katie Johnson: And what great timing. On November 5th we are going to set that foundation before you get into the craziness of the holidays. So next Tuesday, November 5th, 5:45 is when the session starts. Goes until 7:00 again in the Fergus Falls Public Library community room. You can RSVP for this session by calling (218) 736-8699, or sending an email to livingwell@lrhc.org. That will help us make sure we have enough snacks. If you don't RSVP and you decide you can show up, please do. We want everyone who can possibly attend to stop by and join us. Again, staying positive and mentally healthy through the holidays with some tools from THRIVE. Jason and Natalie, anything else you want to add today?

Natalie Knutson: I don't think so. Enjoy the sunshine.

JasonBergstrand: Exactly.

Katie Johnson: Yeah, great. Natalie Knutson, wellness director at Lake Region Healthcare and Jason Bergstrand with Partnership for Health, and both with the THRIVE initiative inviting you to our Living Well series, Tuesday, November 5th, staying positive and mentally healthy through the holidays. Jason, Natalie and Katie remind you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.