

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's Health and Wellness segment where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Erin Smith. She's the Library Director at the Fergus Falls Public Library. Good morning, Erin.

Erin Smith: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Well, Erin is here to join us for our last, our eighth week in the Community Health Challenge, the Wheel of Wellness, to help us focus on intellectual health, and the library comes to my mind right away when I think about where is a good place for resources and activities that will help us exercise our minds. And that's what we're going to talk about.

I was looking at the definition that we have on our Wheel of Wellness website of intellectual wellness, and it says it's the desire to learn and develop creatively, mentally, and intellectually. And it encourages the process of being curious. To me, that sounds so much more fun than learning. Being curious is much more fun, feels much more engaging than feeling like I'm going to exercise my brain or I'm going to try to learn. Given this definition, how does it compare with what you personally feel intellectual health or wellness encompasses?

Erin Smith: Well, I agree with your perspective on curiosity. It is a more engaging word to use, and I think curiosity and lifelong learning go hand in hand. It's not every day you have to get out and read three chapters from your textbook from high school or from college. Just be curious. Try new things. We all have our daily routines, and getting out of that rut mentally is important as getting out of that rut physically for your intellectual health.

Katie Johnson: And that's exactly why it has one of the full pieces of pie on the wheel, and as I mentioned, the library is such a great resource for a diverse range of intellectual pursuits, much more than books, but I want to start with books. Let's talk about the resources you have for both the avid reader to maybe the reluctant reader.

Erin Smith: Great question. Avid readers, we talked a little bit at the beginning about the rut, and sometimes those avid readers, we have our favorite authors or we have our favorite genres, and a great way for an avid reader to get out of that rut is to try new authors. Try new genres. Read outside of your comfort zone.

If you're a reluctant reader, maybe try audiobooks. Audiobooks are a great way to read if you don't ... especially also if you're busy, if you don't feel like you have time to sit down and read a book. Put on an audiobook, and that counts. You're still developing. You're still learning. You're still expanding your vocabulary. Your comprehension increases. Your empathy and knowledge about the topic explored in the audiobook increases. So that does count.

Katie Johnson: That's awesome. I think I'd classify myself somewhere in between. I'm not an avid reader, but I enjoy reading, but I'm guessing this is a really common thing

you hear, I just don't have time to do as much reading as I'd like. Do you have any tips for being intentional about making time?

Erin Smith: Yes. I think some people enjoy reading before bed. If reading before bed is a good stress release for you, that's a great way to go. But sometimes reading before bed, you just keep reading. And you find yourself up at 3:00 a.m. and that's probably not the best. Setting aside some different times, maybe in the morning, or setting some time aside on the weekends. Reading to your children also counts, too. A lot of moms and dads maybe don't have time to read for themselves, but reading with your child is a great way to still read.

Katie Johnson: That is a great tip. How about beyond the books? Let's talk about some of the other intellectual activities that the library offers to help people exercise their minds.

Erin Smith: Yes. Well, did you know you can 3D print at the library? That's something to use some of those technologies that we don't have an opportunity to just try in our everyday lives at home. You can do that at the library. We do have a 3D printer and offer 3D printing classes. Lifelong learning, in addition to our traditional forms of literacy, learning about digital literacy and developing your digital literacy is very important in our society today.

If you want some tips on how to expand the apps you use on your smartphone, you can work one-on-one with a librarian to expand those skills, as well, and then we have a whole suite of just classes and events at the library, educational lectures, movies that you can also use to learn new things.

Katie Johnson: Sure. I've heard that you even do game nights, coloring. I can't think of any limit to ... that there's got to be something that would meet your interest areas that's offered at the library.

Erin Smith: Yes, yes. The coloring is a great de-stressor, too. So if you haven't colored since you were eight or nine or 12, we do offer coloring nights, snacks, music and you also are coloring with other individuals, so it's a good socialization activity.

Katie Johnson: And I think you could log your points for both what, social wellness, intellectual wellness, emotional wellness, probably all just in that one class. What about besides the library? Our community has a lot of great local resources. Of course, there are online resources. Do you have some recommendations for other places for people looking for those kinds of intellectual stimulation?

Erin Smith: Yes. I think we are so lucky to live in Fergus Falls. There are so many great opportunities. We have a wonderful county museum. Community Ed offers a whole variety of wonderful classes. The Kaddatz Art Gallery offers classes on if you want to develop your artistic strengths, and that all is part of that curiosity, lifelong learning. So there are a whole host of ideas and ways that you can be

engaged in your community, and also developing your intellectual wellness at the same time.

Katie Johnson: Oh, for sure. And what about online resources? Do you have some favorite places to go, websites or authors or things that are online to direct people to?

Erin Smith: Well, there are so many selections online. There are some brain development games that you can play online. There are also, for our youngest learners, talking about that, too, you can also get texts and early literacy and early learning tips online. I think online there are a ton of options that [crosstalk 00:06:55]

Katie Johnson: And you've sent a couple of those links, so we'll make sure and post those on our Intellectual Wellness page at lrhc.org/wow. I'd like to ask you about research behind the impact of intellectual health and memory and emotional stability. I think there's been a lot of research done in that area, right?

Erin Smith: There has, yes. And doing things as simple as crossword puzzles, Sudoku puzzles, just keeping your brain active is really important in staving off some of the memory loss is what the research has shown, as is just being engaged and socializing. It's a great way to stave off some of that memory loss, that potential dementia that we see happening with some populations.

Katie Johnson: And the library has taken a really active role in addressing dementia, from what I understand.

Erin Smith: Yes. We're starting to be more conscious about adding dementia-friendly resources. We do have a new set of DVD educational resources that we've heard back from a couple of our patrons who checked them out, and they say they're really good and really helpful. And there are also a whole host of books that are new and really up-to-date on the research that you can check out also, so I would encourage people to do that.

Katie Johnson: Definitely. As we kind of wrap up, do you have one or two things you could issue as a challenge to our listeners and our participants in the Wellness Challenge to practice this week as they're focusing on their intellectual wellness?

Erin Smith: Yes. If you're an avid reader, try a different genre. Try a different author. If you're not, if you're busy and you just want to get your toe back in, try audiobooks, read a book to your child, and go beyond books. Really check out all the wonderful things going on in our community that can help you be a lifelong learner. Develop your curiosity.

Katie Johnson: Develop your curiosity. I can hardly wait. If people want to learn more about what's happening at the library, some of the those classes you mentioned and other things, what's the best place for them to find that?

Erin Smith: Sure. Visit our website, ffpubliclibrary.org, and we post all of our events on our Facebook page also.

Katie Johnson: Perfect. And you're in a temporary location now. We should talk about where you are now and when you're going to be in the great new space.

Erin Smith: Yes, we are in temporary location, so please find us. We're at 1505 Pebble Lake Road, right at the intersection of 210 and Pebble Lake Road. That building with the copper-colored awning, and we hope to be back in our expanded and remodeled facility late this year, early next year, depending on, of course, the holidays and how that affects our move-in date, but we're excited, and thank you.

Katie Johnson: Oh, we're very excited for that, as well. Erin Smith, Library Director at the Fergus Falls Public Library. Thanks for joining me today and helping us to explore some ways to practice our intellectual wellness and improve it this week during our Community Health Challenge.

Erin Smith: Thank you, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Erin Smith and Katie Johnson remind you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great week.