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1. Why wellness?

In 2014, ASDA’s immediate past president, Jiwon Lee, died by suicide. Her death was a shock to all of ASDA, especially those who worked closely with her as national leaders. Her friends and fellow ASDA members had no idea about her struggle with depression and feelings of inadequacy. Therefore, ASDA created the Wellness Initiative to ensure that dental students take care of themselves, know where to find information and seek support if they are unable to cope on their own.

Christian Piers, 2015-16 president, wrote, “We can get so caught up in the idea of our invincibility that we lose sight of the fact that we sometimes need to ask for help. And we can get so caught up in the denial that we miss our chance. That’s why we need to look out for each other.”

The purpose of this guide is to help chapter leaders create events that will promote dental student wellness, direct them toward valuable resources and teach ASDA members how to look out for themselves and each other.

2. Five dimensions of wellness

Wellness is more than just eating right or getting regular exercise. Wellness requires a conscious, daily effort towards taking care of yourself emotionally, physically, occupationally, intellectually and environmentally. These are ASDA’s five dimensions of wellness. This section will help you understand each one and suggest ways to make it a priority. Find details online at ASDAnet.org/index/dental-student-resources/health-and-wellness/five-dimensions-of-wellness.

**Emotional Wellness**

Emotional wellness concerns your ability to express your feelings, cope with stress, maintain satisfying relationships and deal with conflict. It encompasses optimism, self-esteem and self-acceptance. Being in tune with your emotional wellness involves cultivating a positive attitude, but also being attentive to your negative feelings and dealing with them in a constructive way.

Dental school can be stressful and may feel overwhelming. Whatever you’re struggling with, you are not alone. Reach out to your support network – tell a friend, a family member or a professor about what you’re dealing with. Not only may they be able to share the burden with you, but also possibly identify solutions or potential outcomes to problems. Reach out and you’ll find that there are resources available.

**Physical Wellness**

Physical wellness promotes proper care of your body for optimal health and functioning. It involves routinely carrying out behaviors that have a significant impact on your wellness (routine check-ups, a balanced diet, exercise, etc.) while avoiding destructive habits (tobacco, drugs, alcohol, etc.).
Occupational Wellness

Occupational wellness entails seeking personal satisfaction and enrichment while being fully engaged in your work. It refers to developing work-life balance, managing working relationships and having enthusiasm for your job. It also means constantly developing the skills required to do your work well.

Environmental Wellness

Environmental wellness refers to your relationship to your surroundings, both your immediate surroundings and the world at large. It’s about finding harmony with the natural world and understanding your impact on it.

Intellectual Wellness

Intellectual wellness encourages us to engage in creative and mentally stimulating activities. It involves actively participating in educational, cultural and community events and combining life lessons with those learned in the classroom. It’s about nurturing curiosity and lifelong learning.

3. Dental School Resources

Most universities and dental schools have health centers that offer counseling services to enrolled students. You can take advantage of counseling services and/or medical services for stress and other areas of mental wellness. It’s in your best interest – and that of your patients – if you are the healthiest version of yourself.

You may also be able to secure speakers for a lunch and learn or seminar to present on a variety of wellness topics, including nutrition, addiction, stress management, eating disorders, sleep, coping with grief and more.

To find out what’s offered at your school and who to contact for more information, visit: 

ASDA.net/index/dental-student-resources/health-and-wellness/school-wellness-resources

The professionals at your school’s fitness or recreation center may also be able to assist with planning an event, providing speaker expertise or equipment for physical activities. Talk to the dental school faculty or (onsite physical therapists) to learn if someone could present an informative session about ergonomics and proper posture for preventing repetitive stress injuries.

Note: If your school’s resource information has changed, please email the updated information to asda@asdanet.org
4. More health and wellness resources

There are many organizations and groups that you can turn to for materials, information or professional participation in your wellness events. Here are a few related to each dimension of wellness.

**Emotional wellness:**

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: **800-273-8255**
- Crisis Text Line: text **HOME to 741741**
- Suicide Awareness Voices of Education: [save.org](http://save.org)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [SAMHSA.gov](http://SAMHSA.gov)
  - Actively Moving Forward (grief resources): [healgrief.org/](http://healgrief.org/)
  - National Eating Disorders Association: [nationaleatingdisorders.org](http://nationaleatingdisorders.org)
  - Social Anxiety Association: [socialphobia.org](http://socialphobia.org)
  - Students Against Depression: [studentsagainstdepression.org](http://studentsagainstdepression.org)
  - Anxiety and Depression Association of America: [adaa.org](http://adaa.org)
  - [Mindful.org](http://Mindful.org)
  - Mental Health America: [mentalhealthamerica.net](http://mentalhealthamerica.net)

**Physical wellness:**

- President’s Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition: [fitness.gov](http://fitness.gov)
- National Sleep Foundation: [sleepfoundation.org](http://sleepfoundation.org)
- National Association for Health and Fitness: [physicalfitness.org](http://physicalfitness.org)
- Let’s Move: [letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/resources](http://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/resources)
  - Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: [health.gov](http://health.gov)
  - Go Ask Alice: [goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://goaskalice.columbia.edu)

**Occupational Wellness**

- ADA Center for Professional Success: [success.ada.org/en](http://success.ada.org/en)
- Business Management Daily (Workplace Communications): [businessmanagementdaily.com/workplace-communication](http://businessmanagementdaily.com/workplace-communication)
- Mental Health America (Work-Life Balance): [mentalhealthamerica.net/work-life-balance](http://mentalhealthamerica.net/work-life-balance)
- Dental Economics (search archive for “ergonomics”): [dentaleconomics.com](http://dentaleconomics.com)
- DrBicuspid CE Library: [drbicuspid.com](http://drbicuspid.com)
Environmental Wellness

- Volunteer Match: volunteermatch.org
- Becoming Minimalist blog: becomingminimalist.com
- Ecology Action Center: ecologyactioncenter.org
- Environmental Work Group (EWG): ewg.org/consumer-guides
  - Earth 911: earth911.com
  - Global Stewards: globalstewards.org/
  - Environmental Protection Agency (enter your zip code for detailed information): epa.gov

Intellectual Wellness

- Lumosity brain games: lumosity.com
- Online games and trivia: Sporcle.com or websudoku.com
- Duolingo (online language learning): duolingo.com
- University of Illinois Wellness Center: wellness.illinois.edu/dimensions/intellectual
  - TED Talks: ted.com

5. National ASDA resources

Wellness Webinars

ASDA hosts webinars on a range of wellness-related topics presented by experts. Recordings are available at ASDAnet.org/webinars. Consider showing a webinar at a chapter event as part of your wellness program.

Social Media

Look for national ASDA’s content on social media using #BeWellASDA – and be sure to promote your chapter’s wellness efforts with that hashtag.

Wellness Month

Wellness Month takes places in September and presents an opportunity for ASDA chapters and dental schools to focus on dental student wellness. The goal is to involve as many dental students as possible at your chapter. All chapters are encouraged to host events encompassing ASDA’s five dimensions of wellness and promote wellness activities to their members.

What kinds of events could your chapter hold?

- Lunch and learn on managing stress, work-life balance, repetitive stress injuries or nutrition
- Presentation by featured speakers from your school’s wellness or counseling center
- Group yoga or meditation class
- Volleyball or kickball tournament
- Walk- or jog-athon that could double as a fundraiser for chapter activities
• Health fair, where dental students can get a free health screening
• Daily or weekly group stretches or exercises
• Meal prepping classes
• Rock climbing or hiking trips

Chapters can also hold challenges or competitions to encourage wellness, including:

• **Hydration challenge**: have members keep track of their daily water intake; create a bulletin board to track weekly totals (-1 star for each caffeinated drink!)
• **Nutrition challenges**: can your entire chapter give up sugar or processed foods for a week? Can you double your fruit and veggie intake? Meatless Mondays? Plan a fun challenge around eating better.
• **Gratitude challenge**: ask members to handwrite notes of kindness or sincere gratitude to fellow students, faculty or advisers that have made a positive impact. Deliver them throughout Wellness Month to share positive energy and brighten someone’s day.
• **Mile-per-day challenge**: host a mile walk around campus at a set time each day that any member can participate in.
• **Step challenge**: keep track of your steps and whichever class year gets the most gets a prize; or participate in ASDA’s Step Out for Wellness Challenge.

During September, national ASDA features:

• Blog posts on wellness
• Social media posts and contests
• Chapter challenges with prizes

[ASDAnet.org/WellnessMonth](ASDAnet.org/WellnessMonth)

Photo credit: Buffalo ASDA
6. **Step-by-step: Planning a wellness event**

a) **Identify a project**
   Which dimension(s) of wellness would your chapter like to target? Remember to keep in mind your chapter’s level of interest and time available for the project. Do not choose a project that will be complex. Choose a project that can be easily scaled up or down, depending on the number of volunteers your chapter is able to attract. For a large-scale event, you will need several months to plan.

b) **Develop a plan**
   Determine what issues need to be addressed. Consider where this event fits in with existing activities and how you can fill in gaps between the needs and the services that exist in your community and your school. Set timelines and manage to them.

c) **Set a budget**
   Plan out a budget that includes all potential expenses associated with the project. Include transportation, equipment, food and speaker fees. Contact other dental organizations, corporate sponsors and local businesses to donate supplies or cover speakers’ fees.

d) **Organize a core team**
   Identify a chair and a core team of three to seven chapter members who will be involved in planning and executing the event. Delegate specific responsibilities to each person so they are clear on what is expected of them. Meet regularly with your team to make sure everyone is on track with their tasks and if not, others can step in to help out. Share timelines and planning documents so everyone can access them and they can be used for future events.

e) **Choose possible dates**
   Cross-reference exam, university and religious observance calendars to select the event date. If you are planning a volunteer activity through an association or a department at the dental school, discuss the timing with them in the earliest planning stages. They often have a small staff and are juggling many events. Follow-up regularly.

f) **Volunteers**
   Actively recruit volunteers with clearly defined roles, time commitments and schedules. Consider partnering with other student groups and invite predental students to participate. Keep in touch with volunteers prior to the event. Secure any (photo) releases or waivers.

g) **Getting materials for your event**
   You may be able to obtain free resources for your event. Explore the resources other existing wellness organizations and your school’s student health/life office.

h) **Event Licenses**
   You may need to apply for one or more event licenses from your local authority. You may also need proof of insurance or insurance waivers. Contact your school’s administration to assist you. You will need to adhere food hygiene regulations if you are planning on preparing food on site. Professional caterers will have (and should provide you copies of) the relevant food hygiene certification.
i) **Promote your event to the chapter**
Provide effective reminders using flyers, posters, emails, social media, chapter newsletters and websites. Use the broadcast email function of the ASDA chapter portal or your chapter mailing list to send invitations to your members. Use opportunities in class and clinic to as available/appropriate.

j) **Briefing and final preparations**
Hold a briefing for all volunteers. Review arrivals, departures, schedule of the event and specific duties, including final clean-up. Coordinate travel and attire. Be sure to send out reminders the night before the event to all volunteers. If you are working with any other organization, be sure and send a confirmation 48 hours in advance that includes the details of the event.

k) **Say thank you**
Be sure to thank everyone involved in the event. Send the volunteers an email thanking them for their participation and asking for feedback. If you worked with an outside organization or obtained supplies or donations from a company, send handwritten thank you notes. This will help foster long-lasting partnerships.

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7. **ASDA chapter wellness event examples**

❤️ **Chapter: Indiana**

**What kind of event did you hold:** Wellness Week

**What were the goals of your event:** As finals were quickly approaching it was important to IU ASDA to provide some lunchtime and evening events and activities that promoted emotional and physical wellness within our student body. These things included bringing in local masseuses and providing 5-minute chair massages in our quiet room, providing healthy lunches or breakfasts throughout the week, bringing in local therapy dogs for some stress relief and nightly exercise classes like yoga and Zumba.

**How many people organized/ran the event:** 3

**How many members attended the event:** 25-75

**How did you promote the event:** Flyers, Facebook, mass emails

**How much did you spend:** $1,500 - cost for three masseuses that came to do the chair massages; healthy lunch bowls provided by a local restaurant on campus; thank you gifts for any speakers or exercise instructors; yogurt and granola bars, and Fitbit prize.

**What was your biggest success:** The positive feedback from the student body. Wellness week is always one of our biggest hits every year.
What was your biggest challenge: Getting student participation for the evening exercise classes.

What kind of event did you hold: Fitness Challenge

What were the goals of your event: Encourage students to incorporate exercise into their daily lives. Students put up stickers when they exercised, and the class with the most stars at the end of the month won a healthy breakfast.

How many people organized/ran the event: 2

How many members attended the event: unknown, est. 150 in the course of a month

How did you promote the event: Social media and email

How much did you spend: $150

What was your biggest success: Raising awareness that it is important to be healthy as a dental student.

What was your biggest challenge: Getting involvement from older students.
Chapter: Virginia

What kind of event did you hold: Nutritional awareness meeting

What were the goals of your event: To promote healthy eating and motivate individuals to begin a new diet regimen.

How many people organized/ran the event: 3 organizers, 4 who ran the event

How many members attended the event: 20-25

How did you promote the event: Email and word of mouth

How much did you spend: $0

If you secured a speaker, how much was that person’s fee: The speaker was recruited from within the school, and she was not paid.

What was your biggest success: Raising awareness that it is important to be healthy as a dental student.

What was your biggest challenge: Getting involvement from older students.
What kind of event did you hold: Spin, yoga and open gym event. We contacted a local gym and asked if we could reserve two classes and an open gym session. They only had us pay their instructor fee and then we had each student pay $10 to raise money for oral cancer. The classes were one hour long. The other option was to pay $7 and do an open gym session.

What were the goals of your event: Our goal was to promote wellness while also raising money for our annual oral cancer walk. We wanted to give students an outlet where they could relax, not think about school and also get a healthy workout in!

How many people organized/ran the event: One student got the ball rolling on the event. As soon as the gym gave us the OK to proceed, many executive board members helped with getting the word out.

How many members attended the event: 30-35

How did you promote the event: We made flyers and hung them around the school. We created a Facebook event and invited the whole school. As the event was approaching, we sent out weekly emails to get people to sign up. We took advantage of a personal connection with an Ernst and Young employee, who spread the word to coworkers and got us some generous donations.

How much did you spend: Each class was $40 (to pay the instructor fee), so we wound up paying $80 total. However, the event was extremely successful so we paid our ASDA chapter back and donated the rest of the proceeds to the Oral Cancer Foundation.

What was your biggest success: I think we were really successful in getting students to realize how important it is to take care of yourself. It is so easy to get caught up in the chaos of dental school, but it is crucial to take a break and do something that makes you feel good. This event was affordable, a great way to get students together, and provided students a break from their busy lives!

What was your biggest challenge: At first, it was difficult to get people to sign up. So many of us are so busy with school and our personal lives and because of that, it is difficult to get people to commit. However, as soon as people started spreading the word, the classes filled up quickly. If we have an event like this again, I would definitely make more classes available to accommodate more people!
Chapter: Buffalo

What kind of event did you hold: Massage therapy

What were the goals of your event: To give students a way to relax after the stresses of class and clinic.

How many people organized/ran the event: 2

How many members attended the event: 32

How did you promote the event: Emails and Facebook posts

How much did you spend: $480 ($60 per hour per chair). The first time we held the event we had one chair/therapist for 2 hours, and this accommodated 8 students for a 10-minute massage. The total was $120. The second time we held the event, we had three chairs for 2 hours, accommodating 24 students, totaling $360.

What was your biggest success: All attendees left their massage appointment extremely relaxed. Survey sent out after the event received very positive feedback with students wanting more in the future.

What was your biggest challenge: Being able to accommodate everyone that wanted a massage. There was a 30-person waitlist. Price is a major limiting factor.
**Chapter: Buffalo**

**What kind of event did you hold:** Weekly fresh fruit

**What were the goals of your event:** To bring better snack alternatives to students and inspire healthier eating.

**How many people organized/ran the event:** 2

**How many members attended the event:** Hard to determine, but likely members of all classes are taking advantage.

**How did you promote the event:** Initially emails and Facebook posts. The fruit is available in the student cafe and student lounge, so students know that it will be there every week.

**How much did you spend:** $60/week for 300 pieces of fruit

**What was your biggest success:** Students love having free fresh fruit available every week. The biggest success was overhearing someone saying that now they can eat a piece of fruit instead of going to the vending machine.

**Chapter: Buffalo**

**What kind of event did you hold:** Therapy dogs

**What were the goals of your event:** To reduce the stressful atmosphere of dental school around midterms and finals

**How many people organized/ran the event:** 2

**How many members attended the event:** ~30-40

**How did you promote the event:** Email, Facebook posts, wellness board flyer

**How much did you spend:** $10 gift cards given to the volunteers (dog owners), ~$30 on vegetables for snacks

**What was your biggest success:** Students really enjoyed their lunch break playing with dogs and eating healthy snacks.

**What was your biggest challenge:** Initially getting all the contacts and coordinating with the volunteers.
Chapter: Ohio State

What kind of event did you hold: Yoga night
What were the goals of your event: To help students relax mentally and physically before finals week.
How many people organized/ran the event: 1
How many members attended the event: 28
How did you promote the event: Social media was the most successful. We also used email and word of mouth.
How much did you spend: $75 (included instructor, A/V, and room rental)
If you secured a speaker, how much was that person’s fee: The yoga instructor’s fee was included in the price; they worked for the university rec center.
What was your biggest success: Students were really excited after the event and spread positive ASDA reviews.
What was your biggest challenge: Finding a quality instructor/room, at a better rate than the school.

Chapter: Pacific

What kind of event did you hold: Dugoni Beach Bootcamp
What were the goals of your event: Friendly competition of relay races/obstacle courses at the beach.
How many people organized/ran the event: 2 main leaders, 3 additional leaders
How many members attended the event: 36 competitors (9 teams of 4), ~10 spectators
How did you promote the event: Emails, flyers, social media, table during lunch time to sell tickets & t-shirts
How much did you spend: $650 for T-shirts, snacks, prizes, other race materials (made $720 on ticket sales)
What was your biggest success: Everyone had lots of fun, and all requested that we make it a regular event.
What was your biggest challenge: Having enough people to help publicize and sell tickets.

You can find always find a selection of wellness resources at ASDAnet.org/wellness.