



## Healthy & Resilient You

# Wellbeing Twofers

5 Single Actions that Boost Both Physical and Emotional Wellbeing



Everyone knows working on our physical and emotional wellbeing is important to longevity and quality of life, but how do we know where to start? Which comes first? What's the best ratio of body/mind attention?

It's like life gave us a bunch of flat-pack furniture from IKEA to assemble, only without the cartoon instructions. And left the little wrenches out of the box to boot.

Even if we know how to begin, trying to work a bunch of constructive steps into an already overloaded schedule can overwhelm us and derail our efforts.



If only there were ways to feed two birds with one scone. Modern science tells us there just might be!

### The Mind-Body Debate

Historically, our understanding of the mind-body connection has fluctuated. Early philosophical and religious thinkers believed there was no distinction between the two. They also believed that outside spiritual forces caused disease and illness. Then, around the 17th century, what would become modern medical science began.

As medical scientists began to discover things like germs and (literally) peel back and study the physical layers of the body, they took the stance that mind and body were separate. Mind was the immaterial and thinking part of a human, and body was the material but unthinking part.


This mind-body *dualism* was the prevailing understanding in modern medicine until recently when technological leaps empowered science to examine mind and body on microscopic and genetic levels. These deeper insights show that persistent thoughts and emotions can change both our genetic makeup and the neural wiring in our brains, and that emotions—once thought exclusively mental—exist as specific compounds within our physical bodies.


In simpler terms, mind and body are so deeply interrelated that, if not one and the same, they function as if they are.


With this improved understanding, medical science is beginning to approach emotional and physical wellbeing holistically, understanding that caring for either requires caring for both.

### Since Body and Brain Are the Same...


Fortunately, we don't need to be neuroscientists or geneticists to leverage the mind-body connection to increase wellbeing. Because the emotional and physical are deeply interconnected, there are simple everyday habits we can focus on that improve both at once. Here's a list of ideas.


 **Prioritize sleep** – One-third of adults in the US say they get less than seven hours of sleep a night. Sleep deprivation negatively impacts our immune systems, slows mental processes, and inhibits our ability to counter stress and negative emotions. Concern's [Wellbeing Library](#) has many informative and instructional articles to help maximize sleep.

 **Mix in mood-lifting foods** – Many of us habitually reach for increasing quantities of comfort foods when stressed (or sleep-deprived). A little cake never killed anyone, but a lot is a different story, and moderation can be extra hard at these times. [Mindfully mixing in a few specific foods in between bites of cake](#) can help bust stress and generate healthy changes in mind and body.

 **Meditate more** – A Harvard study that focused on reversing stress had participants regularly sit quietly for 20 minutes while mentally repeating a positive phrase or belief and practicing body relaxation

meditation. In this study, participants demonstrated a change in gene expression, improving the response of genes that dealt with inflammation reduction, free-radical elimination, and cell regeneration. Try this [body scan meditation](#) while mentally repeating a positive or happy statement.

 **Make friends with your inner voice** – Our thoughts can influence physiological changes for better or worse, so why not focus on better? Be aware of internal monologues and when they're overly critical, anxious, or negative, [gently interrupt and redirect them](#). When practiced consistently, this technique can physically rewire our brains making automatic thoughts more likely to follow constructive and uplifting pathways.

 **Stay hydrated** – On average, 60% of the human body and as much as 85% of the human brain are made of water. Our brains rely on that water to transmit the electrical signals that keep our mind-body unit running. That means that even mild dehydration can negatively affect physical and mental function. So sip away throughout the day!



#### PRO TIP:

Use your Concern benefits. [Our included personal coaching services](#) are an extremely effective way to clarify and achieve wellbeing goals. And, this [four-episode Body Scan program](#) from eM Life will help build positive meditation skills.

For customized tools and resources, visit Concern's Digital Hub by logging in to [employees.concernhealth.com](#), and selecting the "Get Services" button in the upper right menu.

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice.

If you find your level of stress is impacting your wellbeing, you can contact us for additional help and support.

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