

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



OCTOBER 2023



As the months get chilly it's important to stay active. There are many ways older adults can keep moving and incorporate physical activity and exercise throughout the autumn into winter months.

For example, try walking around the mall, or an indoor track. Perhaps join an exercise class in the community. Take the time to create a space you can call your home gym or go outdoors and take advantage of many outdoor winter activities.

Some outdoor activities like apple picking, raking leaves, visiting a corn maze, walks or bike rides, hiking, dancing and outdoor yoga classes you and your family can enjoy together.

Plan to stay active during the months in which you feel the least motivated. A good plan would include a list of activities you like to do and how to motivate yourself on the harder days.

Don't forget it is important to enjoy what you do!



## The VON SMART Program

Helping to keep our community dwelling older adults active, engaged and free from falls!

For more information about SMART exercise classes and fall prevention workshops please contact:

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## Exercising your Brain

Did you know that exercise is more than just for the muscles and heart? For healthy aging, it is important that people exercise their brains as well! Strengthening mental muscles improves memory, attention, reaction time and coordination.

Consider incorporating a variety of mental activities such as sudoku, crosswords, or word searches. It only takes a few minutes every day to exercise one of the most important muscles in the body. Studies have found it is most beneficial to practice brain exercises a little bit each day versus a few hours each week.

Stimulation for the brain:

- Play games: jigsaw puzzles, games that rely on logic, math, word and visuospatial skills
- Read a variety of books with different genres, characters, plots, etc.
- Use all the senses: smell, touch, taste, hearing and sight
- Daily meditation: this reduces stress, anxiety and calms the body
- Learn a new skill: this works multiple areas of the brain at once!



## Emotional Wellness

In a previous newsletter the topic of wellness was briefly described as being multifaceted. Wellness for an individual can include spiritual, physical, emotional, social and mental well-being. Emotional wellness is the ability to effectively handle life's stresses, ups and downs, to cope and remain resilient during difficult times. Here are five strategies to improve emotional health.

1. Build resilience – research states that those who are emotionally well, experience fewer negative emotions and are able to bounce back from difficult times faster. Learning healthy ways to cope and how to draw from resources in the community can help build resilience.
2. Reduce stress – it's not a secret that everyone experiences stress at some point. Short term stress can result in increased energy/motivation to get through things but long-term stress can wreak havoc on the body. Learning ways to cope with stress can also boost resilience.
3. Sleep – be sure to sleep 8 hours a night in order to wake up feeling well rested. Good sleep hygiene helps people stay alert and supports quicker reflexes and responses to the changing environment people move through during the day.
4. Social connectedness – scientists have found that our social ties have a strong connection between emotional and physical health. Despite online connections that seem to make the world a smaller place, people are feeling more isolated on a global scale. A VON SMART group exercise class can help!
5. Mindfulness – this is a simple concept that means being present in the moment. It means not living on "auto pilot", but being aware of and acknowledging what is happening around you.

## Did You Know?

(Dancing for Healthy Aging)

### Dancing for Healthy Aging: Functional and Metabolic Perspectives



In the past dancing has been used as a form of exercise to improve functional and metabolic outcomes in aging populations. In 2019, researchers investigated the relationship between dancing for functional and metabolic purposes.

The researchers divided the style of dance into 5 categories (1) cultural dance developed by groups of people to reflect the roots of a certain region; (2) ballroom dance; (3) aerobic dance; (4) dance therapies which included emotional and physical aspects; (5) classical dance. They intended to investigate the following outcome measures: (1) static and/or dynamic balance, (2) gait ability, (3) upper and/or lower muscle strength or power, (4) cardiorespiratory fitness, (5) flexibility, (6) risk of falls, and (7) quality of life. Metabolic outcomes included (1) lipid and glycemic profile; (2) systolic and diastolic blood pressure; (3) body composition; and (4) other specific cardiovascular risk factors or inflammatory or oxidative stress markers.

The dance styles most used were ballroom and cultural dances. Balance was the functional outcome most often assessed. The researchers concluded that any dance style can induce positive functional adaptations in older adults, especially related to balance. Metabolic improvements may also be a result of dancing. Dancing may be a potential exercise intervention to promote health-related benefits for aging individuals.

# VON SMART Instructor Feature!



## CHALAINE ALLISON

We have a new addition to the SMART Team! Chalaine Allison is our new Program Coordinator for Windsor-Essex SMART. Chalaine comes to the VON from the Community Support Centre of Essex County where she was the Adult Day Program Coordinator. She is passionate about living a healthy, active lifestyle and is certified to teach Yoga, DrÖmfit and Pilates. Chalaine lives in Belle River with her husband, 2 young children and 2 cats. Fun fact: she can walk on her hands!

As Program Coordinator, Chalaine will be facilitating exercise classes, fall prevention workshops and will also assist with the expansion of the VON SMART program in the community. Chalaine will act as co-chair on the Windsor-Essex County Fall Prevention Committee.

Welcome Chalaine!

## Resources

### McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

#### 4 POPULATIONS THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM HOME-BASED EXERCISE ([mcmasteroptimalaging.org](http://mcmasteroptimalaging.org))



Research appears to support the notion that our homes can be locations that we leverage to improve our health and well-being through exercise. People living with specific health conditions that negatively impact their quality of life and older adults living in the community are a few examples of populations that may benefit from home-based exercise.

#### 1. People with peripheral artery disease

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) falls under the umbrella of cardiovascular diseases. It is a condition that causes the arteritis to narrow from plaque build-up, leading to decreased blood flow in areas of the body that are impacted. PAD frequently occurs in the legs. Research shows that structured home-based exercise programs can boost walking distance and physical activity levels in people with PAD in their legs.

#### 2. People living with Parkinson's disease

Parkinson's disease falls under the umbrella of neurological disorders. It impacts the central nervous system, resulting in issues related to balance, movement, and posture, among many others. Research shows that home-based exercise programs can enhance walking speed and balance-related activities in people with Parkinson's by a small amount. What is more, when it comes to balance-related activities and quality of life, home-based exercise programs may be just as effective as those taking place outside of the home.

#### 3. Women with urinary incontinence

Urinary incontinence is a condition marked by the involuntary loss of bladder control. Research shows that pelvic floor muscle training can improve urinary incontinence in women living with various forms of the condition, and in some cases even cure it. On an even brighter note, these exercises can be done from the comfort of home, as one option. They require little to no equipment, and folks can lean on guidance and support from multiple sources—such as a physiotherapist or other healthcare professional that provides them with at-home exercises, and reputable instructional videos or mobile apps.

#### 4. Older adults living in the community

Phone calls, videogames, websites, DVDs, mobile apps, videoconferencing tools, and the list goes on. Digital technologies and the rate at which they are evolving are helping to make exercising at home easier than ever. Research shows that home-based exercise programs delivered via digital technologies can improve physical function and health-related quality of life and reduce falls in older adults living in the community.

Interested in exercising at home? First, consult your healthcare team to see if this strategy is appropriate for you and how to engage in it safely. Through conversation you can identify preferences, determine whether supervision or adaptations are needed, and if instructions can be provided or recommendations for additional supports made.

## VON Updates

**There will be no classes OCTOBER 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023**



### VON SMART Exercise & Fall Prevention

Windsor-Essex | Chatham-Kent | Sarnia-Lambton

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