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Eisenhower Wellness Institute

Let Innovative Community Resource Helps Valley Residents "Cultivate Resilience"

By: Roxanne Jones

Eisenhower Wellness Institute presents the Wellness Matters Speaker Series which runs from January - April 2014. For more information, please visit emc.org/wellness.

"Wellness is about so much more than simply the absence of disease," says Jeralyn Brossfield, MD, the new Medical Director of the Eisenhower Wellness Institute. "The body knows how to heal; if we can bring it back into balance, it has the capacity to be really healthy for our entire lifespan. This is resilience, and wellness is about cultivating this resilience."

The Eisenhower Wellness Institute, located at the Eisenhower George and Julia Argyros Health Center in La Quinta, offers an exceptional array of resources designed to do just that — many of them new and improved under Dr. Brossfield's leadership.

"The Institute houses a variety of integrative practitioners whose work can dovetail with the care that primary care physicians and specialists provide," she explains. "Our focus is on helping people heal their own bodies using resources that include acupuncture, kinesiology (the mechanics of body movement), qi gong, massage, yoga, meditation and nutrition."

"We stand for living life fully, optimally and healthfully," she adds. "Our emphasis is on health care versus sick care."

To that end, one of the Institute's core offerings is a new wellness coaching service to help people create sustained change in adopting healthy behaviors.

"Anyone who becomes a member of the Institute undergoes an initial assessment of their current health status with a wellness coach," Dr. Brossfield says. "This includes testing their body composition, blood pressure and autonomic nervous system which tells us about stress levels and how their body is managing stress.

"We also discuss individuals' priorities for their own health, and develop an action plan to help them achieve their goals," she adds. "The wellness coach is then available for ongoing support."

Valley residents are invited to become charter members of the Eisenhower Wellness Institute with pricing that begins at $125. This entitles them to the intake assessment with a wellness coach and discounts on additional services. More comprehensive packages are encouraged for those who wish a customized program designed by the integrative team.

The Institute also offers a series of free weekly Habits of Health classes centered on lifestyle change and weight loss, two key foundations for creating health.

"We recently finished our first four-week optimal weight group class, and participants lost between nine and 20 pounds just by implementing healthy habits," Dr. Brossfield reports. "Losing just 10 percent of body weight changes a person's disease profile and it can be done by making fairly simple lifestyle changes without great deprivation."

The Institute also offers weight loss through partial meal-replacement programs combined with education and coaching.

Studies find that this approach is a consistent and safe method to reach an optimal weight. These programs include transition and whole-food maintenance systems that are based on low-glycemic eating.

“This program helps clients loses more weight faster,” Dr. Brossfield says, “and it has a broad range of application. “For example, one client recently lost 110 pounds and reduced his medications from ten to one, while another took two weeks to lose just 6 pounds but in doing so, dropped her cholesterol by 100 points.” Support and coaching make this change sustainable as the client implements new healthy habits.

To make its offerings more accessible, the Institute is creating a network of community class sites in Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert and La Quinta, and is forging partnerships with Valley country clubs to provide wellness services within their gates.

Starting in January 2014, the Institute launches a monthly wellness speaker series at the Helene Galen Auditorium at the Annenberg Center for Health Sciences on Eisenhower Medical Center’s Rancho Mirage campus (see sidebar for schedule).

“We’re creating a unique reception before each event that is tied to the topic, such as a healthy happy hour or an hour of caregiver nurturing, depending on the corresponding presentation,” Dr. Brossfield notes.

“Whether you’re a busy, stressed-out mom, a cancer survivor, a retiree with irritable bowel syndrome or weight issues, or a business owner who’s anxious due to the economy, we have different approaches to help you optimize your health and integrate wellness into your life,” Dr. Brossfield says.

“I’m a good example — I’m a busy doctor who doesn’t always prioritize taking care of myself,” she adds. “Yet I’ve learned that just by practicing yoga, I’m more equipped to stay steady and in a place of ease.”

The Institute also is developing workplace wellness resources for Eisenhower Medical Center employees. These include pilot relaxation and “brain recess” stations so employees can take 15 minutes to rebalance and relax, and after-work yoga and tai chi classes.

“There are so many things we can do to incorporate wellness into our daily lives,” Dr. Brossfield continues. “From practicing mindfulness, to nourishing our bodies and souls through healthy foods, physical movement, to building relationships and experiencing fun and creative play — they’re all integral pieces of a healthy life.”

What these practices look like varies for each of us, she stresses.

“Mindfulness could be meditation, yoga or a morning run,” she says. “Just find some time for a mind-body connection and simply being present.”

“People are not broken,” Dr. Brossfield says. “People are whole but maybe just can’t see or feel it because of how they’ve had to adapt to life. Feeling unwell is usually a result of our bodies trying to adapt to some stressor.”

“We’re here to help people experience wellness,” she adds. “We provide a safe, guiding space and walk alongside them on their journey toward health. We meet people where they are, and empower them to develop the resilience they need to manage what comes at them.”

To learn more about the Eisenhower Wellness Institute and its services, please visit emc.org/wellness.
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