

TO YOUR HEALTH

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H A P P Y
Holidays

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Embracing the Extraordinary: Tapping into Your Superpower

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Our superpowers are like treasures hidden in a vault. Most of us are not even aware of possessing any such capabilities, however, have you ever considered an ordinary experience that has morphed into an extraordinary investment? As we age, possessing a superpower enables us to



transform obstacles into opportunities. While we bid farewell to 2023, it is time to harness our superpowers and navigate the uncharted territories of the next year.

Frederick Nietzsche said, "All truly great thoughts are conceived by **walking**." Visionaries like Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg embraced the superpower of walking. Both of them were known to have meetings while they walked. They turned routine strolls into mobile think tanks. Research underscores the cognitive benefits of walking and has shown that our sensory system works best when we are moving. Shane O'Mara, a neuroscientist, from Trinity College Dublin, celebrates the benefits of walking. He adds that walkers have lower rates of depression and walking boosts creativity. His research has concluded that walking makes us healthier and happier.



Sparks of **creativity** and **curiosity** illuminate the dark spaces in our mind. They reside within all of us and can be tapped at any time. Pursuing creative behaviors helps with cognitive health and physical vitality. Engaging in creative tasks like knitting, drawing or writing assists in the release of dopamine, a chemical in our bodies that helps with feelings of pleasure and reward.

For musicians, creativity stimulates both hemispheres of the brain. Research indicates that creativity helps reduce depression and isolation and opens up avenues to making decisions and choices. Express your creativity by joining the Knitwits or delve into the Resident-led art classes. Try the monthly Meditative Coloring group. Creativity enhances curiosity which in turn supercharges your brain. Research reflects that curiosity improves relationships and helps us expand empathy within us.

Empathy is a superpower that can heal and foster compassion. It is the superglue that binds the CWV community together. Alfred Adler's words echo: "*Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.*" Empathy promotes trust, compassion and belonging. Small gestures of active listening and asking questions nurture empathy. Performing random acts of kindness enhances empathy. The Vigil Volunteers at CWV sit with Residents at the end of their life and provide companionship. This act of immense compassion and grace demonstrates the power of empathy in our daily lives. Compassion, a corner stone of **resilience**, fortifies us in the journey of life.

Kindness
is the most important
superpower



Resilience, a dynamic force, holds the mind and body together. Resilience is about adapting to an ever-changing environment. Margaret Gullette the author of *Ending Ageism*, said, "*Resilience is not a trait. It's a strategy.*" This shield has enabled individuals

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to become more durable and productive members of society. In 1979 Susan Kobasa, a psychologist, wrote a seminal paper on **Hardiness**. She observed that the threads of resilience are woven together by a triad of challenge, commitment and control. In essence resilient individuals craft together routines, develop relaxation techniques, practice positive thinking, set goals, maintain perspectives and are flexible. Incorporating any of these processes will expand your superpower.

Have you ever wondered that being a **SuperAger** is a formidable achievement? The phrase was coined by the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. It refers to an individual over eighty years whose mental faculties are functioning at a younger age. A constellation of factors, such as biological make up and psychosocial elements play into being a SuperAger. Emily Rogalski, the principal investigator of the study, pointed out that SuperAgers are socially engaged. They either work, volunteer or are closely connected to family. The remarkable tales shared at the Mighty Nineties meeting resonate with narratives of volunteering, connection and collective purpose.

Superpowers are not mythic. They are intrinsic to our wellbeing and lie within all of us. In the dawning of 2024, discover a superpower within. While spreading festive cheer over the holidays, ask family and friends about their superpowers. Their revelations might astonish you. Within the ordinary lies the extraordinary, waiting to be celebrated and shared.

References

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Coming soon in 2024!

Watch for two new groups starting at Carleton Willard in the spring:



Cognitive Wellness

and

Tools for Caregivers

happy
holidays!

The Clinic Staff wishes everyone a
happy and healthy holiday season!

From
Susan, Deb, Maeve, & Kimberly

Please note: A Notary Public is available in the clinic.