

Spring Forward

Here we go again! On March 10, most of the US will reset their clocks for Daylight Savings Time. Changing the clock often means changing your sleep, too. For this reason, **March 10-17** is promoted by the National Sleep Foundation as *Sleep Awareness Week*, meant to raise awareness about the importance of sleep for health and safety. Too little sleep, or poor quality sleep, can affect your physical, social, and emotional wellness and many of the other wellness dimensions. This issue reviews some sleep tips (page 2), since sleep is critical to overall health and wellness health. We also focus on the symbol of the shamrock associated with St Patrick's Day (March 17).



The Shamrock

Many of us who celebrate St. Patrick's Day have ancestors who came to the US from Ireland. As we know, they were not welcome at first. They were stigmatized and discriminated against in negative ways, much like the experience of other immigrant groups today. The US is a melting pot, having opened its arms to people from many cultures who have contributed to the fabric of the US in so many positive ways. We hope this tradition continues, as every immigrant group has enriched our society in so many ways.

In March each year, we have the opportunity to celebrate Irish immigrants. For those of us of Irish descent, it is a day to be proud of our heritage—and wear a bit of **green** and a shamrock. For everyone, it is a day to celebrate the wealth of diversity among us.

The shamrock is a symbol associated with St Patrick's Day. Legend has that, if you carry the four-leaf clover it not only brings you good luck, it can thwart bad luck. The three leaves of an ordinary clover symbolize **Faith, Hope, and Love**. When there is a fourth leaf, you add **Luck!**

Faith: Faith is complete trust and confidence—often meaning certainty in the absence of proof. This can include the beliefs that most certainly do contribute to well-being, such belief that tomorrow will come, that other people usually can be trusted, and that our lives have value.

Hope: Hope is one of SAMHSA's recovery principles (SAMHSA), defined as the belief that challenges can be overcome. As we mentioned in the February issue, research on hope has consistently shown links to good health, longer life, productivity, academic success, and well-being.

Love: A tender and passionate affection for ourselves and others. People who we love and who love us can help support recovery and healing.

Luck: When positive things fall our way, and we had little or nothing to do with that outcome, we say we are lucky. But luck also is in the eye of the beholder. Michael J. Fox called his memoir *Lucky Man*. While he clearly would prefer not to have Parkinson's Disease, he still describes what he has learned and experienced as a surprising gift. Without developing this disease, he says, he never would have received that gift: "I would never have opened it, or been so profoundly enriched. That's why I consider myself a lucky man."

Sleep Tips

- Set up a calming routine for the evening to help you prepare for sleep.
- Go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day. This helps your body predict and take advantage of your sleep time.
- Dim the lights before bed. Make your bedroom dark and as quiet as possible while you sleep.
- Stop your intake of caffeine after a certain time (say 2:00 PM).
- Plan physical activity or exercise daily.
- Find effective ways to reduce anxiety and manage stress during the day.
- Try a physical sleep aids like a sleep mask, a weighted blanket, or an app like Insight Timer (meditation / relaxation) or Sleepio.com
- Try using a **sleep diary**. Here's a free one you can use:
<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/SleepDiaryv6.pdf>



Rest

Rest refers to taking a break from the day's physical and mental activity, through quiet and effortless actions. By slowing down, shifting your focus, and interrupting a busy or stressful day, rest and relaxation can provide a few calm **moments** that restore your energy, interest, and motivation.

Rest can you physically and mentally. Try switching gears from your usual train of thought to a relaxing mental activity. Listen to music, do a puzzle, take a “mindful minute break” or do a one-minute meditation.

In addition to moments of rest throughout your day, consider building **rest** into your exercise routine. This can include time when you lower the intensity of your activity by slowing down, stretching, or working a different part of your body.

The same idea of active rest can apply to other changes in activity. Do you spend a lot of your day sitting at a desk or standing at a counter? Take a break to walk around to help you rest and relax.



References and Resources

- Illustrations are from pixabay.com
- On the botany of the shamrock: <https://ingeniousireland.ie/2013/03/why-is-the-shamrock-a-sham/>
- The symbolism of the shamrock: <https://tenontours.com/shamrocks-and-four-leaf-clovers-whats-the-difference/>
- Research on the relationship between religion and health is limited. Sources used include Ngamaba, K. H., & Soni, D. (2018). Are happiness and life satisfaction different across religious groups? Exploring determinants of happiness and life satisfaction. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 57, 2118-2139; and the *Lancet Series* on faith-based health care (October 2015).
- The definition of rest was adapted from the AOTA Practice Framework.
- Research supports the need for rest: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/mental-downtime/>
- The sleep tips are adapted from <https://sleepfoundation.org> and <https://www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/Professionals/HW/Sleep.aspx> AND Ho, E. C. M., & Siu, A. M. H. (2018). Occupational therapy practice in sleep management: A review of conceptual models and research evidence. *Occup Therapy International*. <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/oti/2018/8637498/>

