

127:

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Welcome to *12 Degrees*, the podcast that offers real life strategies for nurturing full spectrum wellness. I'm Lindsey Whissel Fenton.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I'm Christina Lightner.

DESHNA NAGAR: And I'm Deshna Nagar.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Together, we explore the twelve areas of wellness that influence how we feel and function.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: We share our own personal experiences, and the research backed strategies we find helpful, and give thoughts for how you can adapt them for your life.

DESHNA NAGAR: We want to empower you to make informed choices across the full spectrum of wellness. In this episode, we're wrapping up the season by checking in on our own wellness journeys and sharing how we've put some of the strategies we've talked about into practice. Our hope is that hearing what's worked and what hasn't will give you ideas, encouragement, and some extra motivation for your own wellness journey too.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Well, to start, I'll just share that my emoji game has improved thanks to our Gen Z coolness guru, Deshna.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Mine has two. Although, my 12-year-old daughter likes to remind me not to do too much. Apparently, there's a fine line between being cool and trying too hard. I'm just happy to know what half the emojis mean now.

DESHNA NAGAR: I see it as nurturing my soul with wellness.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: But aside from increasing our collective coolness quotient, what's coming up for the two of you in terms of challenges, victories, and/or new ideas?

DESHNA NAGAR: So, something that I've been doing a lot of, and it was because it's just so easy to use this wellness technique, it's easy to do, is I've started keeping the windows open more often, especially since we have really nice weather outside. I've also been getting down at a bus stop that's further away from my house, and so I'm walking more, which is really nice. And I am being very intentional with the language that I use with myself and with other people.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Oh. And we're going to celebrate wins. So yay, Deshna. All of that is very positive.

DESHNA NAGAR: Thank you.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Christina, what about you?

127:

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I like that you are keeping your windows open. That's something that I like to do as well. And you talked about taking a bus stop that's further away. And I've continued to travel different ways. So, when we talked about different ways to travel home, I still take different exits. I do have my favorite exit, but I definitely take different ones. And then I also like that you brought up the language that you're using with yourself and others and being intentional in that, and that's also something that I try to practice, especially, I find myself harder on myself than I am with other people. And so, remembering—talk to myself, my five-year-old self, and be nice to myself. So very important reminders. Thank you, Deshna. Some other things that have been going on in my life recently as we just got to raised garden beds, and so we've been putting those together. And my partner does do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to that, like putting them together and getting all of the material in the beds and all of that. But super excited. We started seeds with my daughter, and so she's gotten to grow seeds, and it's important for me for her to be excited about the food that we grow. And so, we did let her pick some things out. And she picked carrots, which I know can be hard. And so, I warned her, like, this could be a hard vegetable to grow, but we're going to try. So excited about that. And I'm interested, what's coming up for you, Lindsey?

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Well, we're going to celebrate Christina. Yay, Christina. Those are all great. I think, like both of you mentioned, with the movement, I've been very intentional. And I really have been, like, parking at the back of the lot, even when it's cold or rainy out. And I do wear a bio tracker. So, I will say, I can attest, that really does make a difference and hitting your activity goals for the day. I've also really taken seriously my hydration, and I have started I used to do this. I don't know why I stopped, like as soon as I get up in the morning, I basically chug two glasses of water to start the day fully hydrated. And then little things, like when I would fill up my water bottle for the gym, a lot of times, I would get maybe like half or 3/4 of the way through it, and then I would like to dump the rest of it or drink it later. So now I've made it a thing to, like, no, I'm going to empty my water bottle, every time. So even if that's just me chugging it in my car afterwards, like, I've just really paid attention to my water intake. And I've also been really intentional about making plans and keeping them. I was thinking the other day of a meme I saw going around during lockdown, it was like, oh, I really miss canceling plans with my friends because that's what we tend to do as adults. So, I've made a big commitment to make plans to stick with them, not kick them down the road and schedule them. So, I've been doing better with that. And also, I'm trying to make plans that involve getting out of the house more because even when I do make plans, a lot of times it's just, like, friends will just hang out at each other's houses, so going to things, trying things. And I do think the nice weather makes a big difference. So, I think this will probably air a little later than when we're recording it. But as of right now, it's gorgeous outside. It's warm, and because the weather's so nice, I've been going on more walks every day, like, I do, like, a morning and evening walk now. Sometimes a lunchtime walks. So not only movement, but my environmental wellness. And I've been really having a lot of fun with that app. I think we talked about. It's called Merlin. Again, not an endorsement, but I think it's free anyway, it's by Cornell Labs, and you can track what

127:

birds are around you. And there are so many birds around me, like, the last three days I've heard birds that I've never even heard of before. So, I'm having fun with that and nurturing again, like, physical, environmental, emotional wellness, by getting out for these walks more and really taking advantage of the fact that hey, I moved to the ocean to enjoy being by the ocean. So that's me.

DESHNA NAGAR: I love that, Lindsey. And for those of our listeners who are bird enthusiasts, could you tell us more about what kind of birds you heard or spotted?

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Oh, OK. Well, I'm like a newbie bird watcher, so I'm learning to as I go. I will warn you that it becomes highly addictive, very fast. Like, it's like a game I play with myself in my morning. Like, as soon as I leave, I pull up my little bird app, and then I track like who's out on the walk. So well, we have Carolina Wrens, which are my favorite bird. I first saw those when I was out climbing once. And I think of them little flying chipmunks because they're little and they look like chipmunks. Let's see, Greater Yellowlegs, and a Fish Crow, which I'd never heard of before. I'd only heard of normal crows. And oh, an Eastern Bluebird. I got a flag on my thing that that's a rare bird in this area, a Tufted Titmouse, and then—

DESHNA NAGAR: Wait, what was the last one, again?

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: It's called a Tufted Titmouse.

DESHNA NAGAR: I heard titmouse.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: A Tufted Titmouse, and then lots of woodpeckers, finches, robins, starlings—the normal suspects.

DESHNA NAGAR: Oh, my God.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Lots of different types of—

DESHNA NAGAR: I just googled a Tufted Titmouse, and it looks adorable.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: They're so little. They're so cute. And then probably weirdest one that I've never heard of before was a Brown-headed Cowbird.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Interesting. And I did go home that day, and I listened to birds and counted birds, but I have not downloaded this app yet, and so I need to bring my phone with me. Part of my wellness activities is leaving my phone behind, so this one I need to incorporate so that I can learn the different birds. It's so interesting, Lindsey. And we didn't celebrate your wins yet.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Oh.

DESHNA NAGAR: Yeah.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Thank you.

DESHNA NAGAR: Oh, my gosh. This Tufted Titmouse—

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: It sounds like Deshna has a new favorite bird right now.

DESHNA NAGAR: I do. It looks like a tiny punk rocker.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: It does.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Yeah, we have those around too.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Well, in addition to our wins, we can maybe also share some things that we have discovered or just want to mention. So, when I shared with you too, that I was so excited about was I was going to a different gym when I was in Buffalo at my dad's house. And for International Women's Day, I walked in, and they had all of these handwritten notes like taped to each locker, each bathroom stall. And then I noticed that there was a basket with note cards and pens, and there was just a sign that said, like, leave a nice message for International Women's Day. And it was, like we talked about, like finding a painted rock. It was such a boost. And it just made me so happy to read all of these different handwritings and messages of just encouragement and validation. It was amazing. And then the same gym they started doing like a daily poll when you walked in, and it was just like split in two. They just had a whiteboard, and it was like, would you rather be able to travel to the past or the future? Things like, do you like coffee or mocha? And it's like you couldn't just walk by and not do it. It was just like, so engaging and fun and I just thought those were really cool, and I couldn't wait to share them out on this episode.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Yeah, I'm taking notes for what we could do with our students. It sounds like so much fun.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: What about you? Have you seen things that you were like, that's such a cool wellness strategy?

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Do you have something that you discovered that you can talk about while I think about mine?

DESHNA NAGAR: Yeah, as Lindsey was sharing, what came up for me was—so what our faculty does at the Herr clinic is that they set up counselor, like they set up treats and a huge board with really supportive messages for Counselor Appreciation Week. So, they have a raffle and whoever wins gets a gift card. And I actually won one last year, and I got to go to Red Lobster for free. So that was really nice.

127:

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: That's awesome.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Oh, I thought of another one that I've implemented from our not quite our conversation, but I shared out in our conversation. I did an interview with a food scientist who studied the health benefits of cocoa. So, I have started drinking more cocoa like pure cocoa. I now make this a little nightly ritual for myself, and I checked it doesn't really have a ton of caffeine, so I make this pure cocoa drink, and I put it in a little almond milk. And the research has shown that it helps with inflammation. I can't honestly say if I feel like it is making a difference, but at least it's a fun ritual that also means I'm not drinking like a glass of wine or something. So, I drink my little cocoa at night while am winding down for bed.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Yeah, I've been thinking about substituting my daily unsweetened tea for Cocoa. I also do really love dark chocolate, so when I heard that episode, I was like, oh, thank God I'm doing something that's good for my gut health, because it's really good for my motivation. It's like, OK, if you do this, you can have a piece of dark chocolate.

DESHNA NAGAR: I'm going to start looking for research to justify every guilty pleasure I have when it comes to food.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: I support this.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I totally support this too.

DESHNA NAGAR: I'm wondering what are areas of wellness that are still challenging for you.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: One thing that comes up for me is continuing to declutter. I mentioned about my work office being renovated currently, and so having all those extra items in my house has been challenging. So now, like decluttering. And then once you get decluttered, organizing what you have. But I'm super excited for the office to open back up. And another thing that I'm still working on is my boundaries. So, setting those boundaries and using all of the techniques and having the preprepared statements is helpful. But it's still a challenge. And then we talked about the fear of missing out. So having that balance between yes responses and no responses when opportunities present themselves.

DESHNA NAGAR: I'm also wondering if you've been able to give yourself more grace, Christina, throughout your wellness journey?

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I think so. That's always a struggle for me too, is being nice to myself, and it's a challenge, but I think I'm getting better at it.

DESHNA NAGAR: OK.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: Yeah.

DESHNA NAGAR: Yeah. What's coming up for you, Lindsey?

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: I already alluded to this, but the workaholism is still an ongoing struggle. I also have such a hard time even calling it workaholism, because I feel like that has a negative connotation where it's not coming from, I don't know, like a stressor, external pressure-based focused, a lot of it is just things I feel internally driven that I want to do or creative projects I want to take on. But I also do recognize the importance of that personal internal boundaries around not letting that be my whole life. So I've become more conscious of that, become a little bit better about putting the computer down for the day, going for my walk to separate my day, and also having compassion for myself as I do navigate trying to have boundaries around that. And another ongoing challenge, if I'm being honest, is you both talked about this, a bit of thinking of how we talk to ourselves and being mindful of the grace we show ourselves is being mindful of my own inner critic, when I do implement a new positive strategy in my life that I feel like is working, I have this narrative that I have to constantly push back on of it won't last, or you'll do this for a little while and then you'll get stressed and you'll stop doing it. And so being aware of that voice, staying curious about it, but then finding positive ways to counter that voice.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I love the tip, taking a walk or doing something to break up the workday from personal life. And that's something that since that episode, I've been trying to do more of. So instead of continually opening my computer throughout the night when ideas pop up, I'll jot them on a piece of paper instead of opening my computer, because it's like once it's open, it's like then the emails open, and then you're doing things and you're like, oh my gosh, why am I working. So, I like that tip of taking a walk or replacing the drive home with something when we're working from home.

DESHNA NAGAR: Yeah.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: What about you, Deshna? What's still on your challenge list?

DESHNA NAGAR: This is one that ebbs and flows for me. It's being in the present. On days that I have a lot of things to do, or I'm stressed, I find my thoughts floating away. And so that's something that I'm still working on.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: What things have you tried?

DESHNA NAGAR: So, this is something that I do with my clients a lot too, of bringing a lot of attention to their nonverbal behaviors. So, I'll see myself fidgeting or I'll start pacing the room and I'll ask myself, OK, what's going on and try to bring more awareness to my bodily sensations. And OK, where do I feel this anxiety? And that in itself is so grounding for me.

127:

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Well, as we wrap up this wrap up of our season, maybe we could end by talking about things that have us feeling hopeful because, again, as one of our ongoing themes has been, wellness is a journey, not a destination. So, as we continue along our journey, what are we hopeful for?

DESHNA NAGAR: And now that I've graduated, I hope that, as I continue on this new chapter of my life, I am able to carve out more time for my physical wellness.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: What's coming up for you, Christina?

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I'm hopeful that I'll continue to work on all of the challenges but also continuing to build on the interconnectedness of the twelve degrees, and then hopeful that I'll be a good role model for my daughter as well, and that she'll see wellness as a priority. That's always something that I'm really hopeful for. I'm also hopeful that I inspire my students as well.

DESHNA NAGAR: Oh.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: What's coming up for you, Lindsey?

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Let's see. For me, our work on this podcast and the discussion and the research we've done has, one, really made me appreciate how interconnected these degrees are and I think become more conscious of the different degrees and how they do all support our overall wellness. And it's also really shown me as we just went through things that we've adopted, that there really are so many seemingly small things that we can do, and that it is possible to adopt positive practices even when we feel overwhelmed and we can't do one more thing, that if that one more thing, I guess, appropriately calibrated to where we are in life, that it is possible. So that gives me hope for additional new positive changes that could be adopted going forward. I guess it's given me a new frame of mind for how possible these positive changes can be.

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I like that message of the possibilities.

DESHNA NAGAR: I like that, and I'm also hopeful that these small shifts that we've talked about ripple outwards, and I'm hopeful that more of us keep choosing progress over perfection and give ourselves permission to grow, rest, and change. That our listeners feel a little more empowered to show up for themselves in real, compassionate ways. And I'm really excited to keep learning and unlearning alongside all of you.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: That's it for this episode of *12 Degrees*. To learn more can visit wellness-dot-psu-dot-edu. Also, be sure to and follow this podcast so you don't miss any of the upcoming conversations that will help you adopt healthy habits. I'm Lindsey Whissel Fenton.

127:

CHRISTINA LIGHTNER: I'm Christina Lightner.

DESHNA NAGAR: And I'm Deshna Nagar.

LINDSEY WHISSEL FENTON: Until next time, we wish you good progress on your wellness journey. *12 Degrees* is produced by WPSU in collaboration with the Penn State Ross and Carol Nese College of Nursing. This podcast is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]