

## How fulfilled are you? Find out with this exercise

*“Whether a life is fulfilled does not depend on how great one’s radius of action is, but rather only on whether the circle is fully filled out.”*

— Viktor Frankl

Spring is here, seasonally and energetically. The birds are flocking back, the bears are emerging, the lambs are birthed, and the flowers have decided now is the time to emerge and continue to bloom.



Robert Mulhall

Most of us will feel a little lighter, maybe even a sense of wanting to jump into something more fully or explore something new. This is the perfect time and energy flow to support this.

A beautiful self-awareness exercise that has been used for centuries is called the Wheel of Life.

There are eight segments that aim to capture most aspects of our lives: romance, personal growth, career, friends and family, physical environment, finances, fun and recreation, health.

The flow for the exercise is to take a few moments to slow down and ask yourself these questions:

1.) Out of a range of 1 to 10 — 10 being the highest score — how satisfied (not happy) are you with each segment of your life at this time (not necessarily today)?

2.) Once you have scored each segment 1 to 10, take a note of what feels surprising, affirming, conflicting.

3.) Of these segments, which ones bring you the most fulfillment?

4.) For one or two of the segments, decide if there is one action step you want to take to move your number closer to 10.

Please keep in mind that we are not aiming for perfection; 10/10 in all segments of life is not how we experience life.

It’s OK to have some areas scoring lower than others, this is how life flows. The hope for this exercise is to simply check in with yourself, to ask some good questions and then choose, if



GILLIAN JONES-HECK — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

Hikers get some fresh air on the Cheshire Harbor Trail to the summit of Mount Greylock in 2022. Fun and recreation are one of the eight segments on the Wheel of Life self-awareness exercise.

you want, to take any actions that the energy of this time of year would support.

A few examples might be that you want to call your friend that you haven’t spoken to in a long time, or send an email about a yoga class schedule, or set up an appointment with a new therapist, or speak with your bank about starting a saving plan or decide to go for a hike once a month.

*“Action expresses priorities.”*

— MK Gandhi

At Kripalu, we are fulling embracing this seasonal energy, new projects are being launched, important decisions are on the table for how we want to invest in the future, and we are already feeling the pull of the sum-

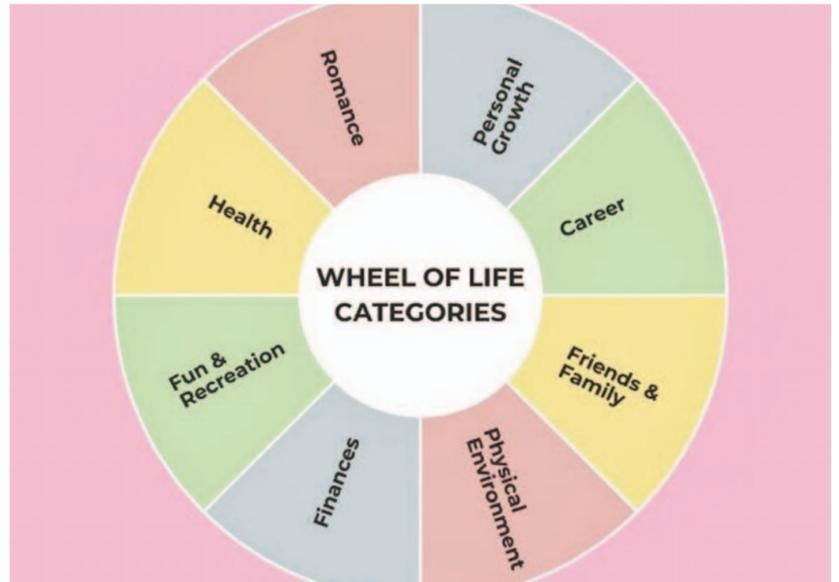
mer that is fast approaching. Our work is to know the future is coming and stay rooted in the present.

I look forward to next month when we can continue to step boldly into our lives and their fuller expression.

Robert Mulhall is the CEO and president of Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health in Stockbridge.

**There are eight categories in the wheel of life, which include: Health, Romance, Personal Growth, Career, Friends & Family, Physical Environment, Finances, and Fun & Recreation.**

ROBERT MULHALL



### HEALTH TAKE-AWAY

## Avoid stroke, heart disease with one simple step

BY TIMOTHY KORTE

Don’t take it with a grain of salt. There are some things in life you can control, and your blood pressure is one of them.

And yet, a half million people in the United States die every year from the effects of high blood pressure or hypertension, including 130,000 from stroke. One in two — fully half — of American adults have high blood pressure, but only one in four have it under control. Usually by their own choice, one in three people with high blood pressure do not follow any treatment at all.

If those same people were to choose just one simple step — reducing their salt intake — there could be a dramatic decrease in needless deaths from stroke and heart disease linked to high blood pressure, a key point during May, which is National Stroke Awareness Month.

Blood pressure is the force on the wall of the blood vessels as the heart pumps and relaxes.

High blood pressure occurs when that force is consistently too high. Systolic blood pressure (the top number) is the amount of force when the heart is pumping. Diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number) is the amount of force when the heart relaxes. Unless properly managed, high blood pressure creates a dangerous workload on your heart and other organs, including your brain, eventually causing health conditions like heart disease and stroke. The recommended blood pressure goal for adults is 120/80 or less.

There are many things in

Current Blood Pressure Guidelines (American Heart Association)	
Normal	Less than 120/80
Elevated	120-129/<80
Hypertension Stage 1	130-139/80-89
Hypertension Stage 2	≥140/ ≥90
Hypertensive Crisis Immediate Evaluation	Greater than ≥180/120

our lives that are outside of our control. When it comes to high blood pressure, there are certain risk factors you can’t completely control: heredity (family history is definitely a factor but can be mitigated by lifestyle choices); age (blood pressure tends to increase as we get older); gender (men have a higher incidence) and race (Black Americans have a statistically higher rate).

But there are far more risk factors you can control: your diet, your weight, your level of physical activity, alcohol consumption, smoking, your cholesterol level and your sleep quantity and quality. Taking your blood pressure medications as prescribed and preventing or managing other conditions like diabetes are other essential steps you can take to control blood pressure.

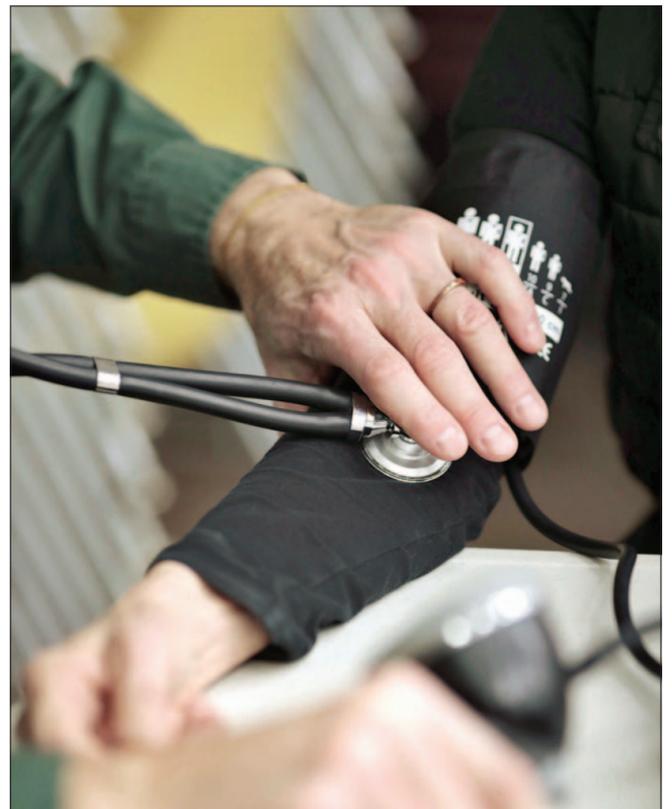
Taking all of those steps all at once isn’t easy. The best advice to people who feel overwhelmed by the challenge is to start with just

one thing with which you believe you can have some success. Reducing your salt could be the easiest choice with biggest, quickest result.

The American diet is loaded with sodium. The saltshaker on the table at home is not the main issue. Almost 80 percent of salt is already in the food you buy, particularly in processed and restaurant or take-out foods. Most of the salt in your diet comes from foods that might not even taste salty, such as breads, meats and dairy products.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium a day for most adults, especially for those with high blood pressure. A quick scan of food labels (and some menus and recipes) shows the numbers.

Once you see how your lower salt intake has reduced your blood pressure, you will have the motivation and confidence to build on that success. You’re already improving



STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN — THE BERKSHIRE EAGLE

The recommended blood pressure goal for adults is 120/80 or less.

your overall diet. Now you can add to the mix by increasing your physical activity, losing some weight, cutting your alcohol consumption, quitting smoking and taking other steps to improve your health. Sometimes we don’t believe we can

actually make ourselves healthier until we take that first important step.

Timothy Korte is a registered nurse and a Wellness Program Manager with Berkshire Health Systems.