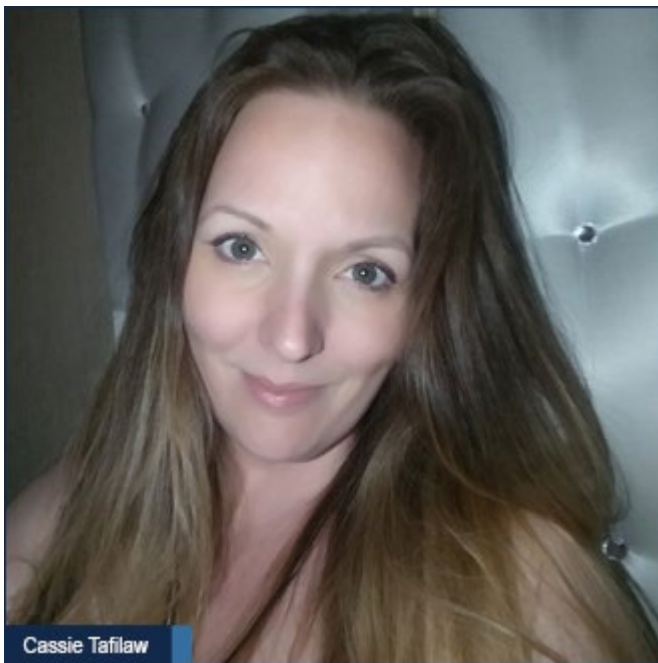


# WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

JULY 2021

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT - July 2021 Wellness Connection Employee Spotlight Interview with Cassie Tafilaw



*By Seth Yoder*

**Q. Could you tell us a little about your role at the University of Illinois?**

**A.** I am a Business Analyst Coordinator with the Office of Organizational Effectiveness and have been at the University of Illinois for 14 years working for the same department throughout my tenure. In my role, I work with internal and external customers to gather requirements on projects that are then developed into a wide variety of deliverables. Another big component of my job is business process improvement, which includes the analysis of a business process to identify

opportunities to improve overall efficiencies or effectiveness.

**Q. During the pandemic we have learned a lot more about the importance of mindfulness and mental health. What do these two areas of health and wellness mean to you?**

**A.** I hold the belief that there are four overall elements to wellness: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. People will often spend a great deal of time focusing on the physical element by working out and eating properly while neglecting the emotional and spiritual elements

of wellness. In my experience, I have come across a number of different ways to develop a routine that will support mental wellness. Some experts believe it is important to maintain a frequent and consistent pattern when it comes to mental wellness. However, I have found if I regularly change my routine, I am more likely to engage with the activities and prevent my routine from becoming stagnant. Some elements of mental wellness that I try to incorporate in my life include practicing meditation, staging my workstation, setting an intention for the day, and setting aside an hour a day to work on my focus and particularly look at professional/personal aspects of my life through a positive lens. While it may not be practical to include all of these activities into my day, as long as I am including at least one of these activities, I feel I am contributing to overall mental wellness.

**Q. There are a variety of ways to incorporate physical activity into our daily lives. You mentioned that you have an appreciation for the power of weightlifting. Could you describe your weightlifting regiment and what type of power you gain from it?**

**A.** I try to include weight training in my fitness routine 4-5 times a week. To monitor my progress, I log the amount of weight, sets, and reps of each exercise I perform during each workout. This way, I am able to see my progress and push myself a little harder each time I encounter that workout. In addition to tracking my progress, I also track my heart rate and calories burned during a workout. I started doing this because I found that I could burn the same, if not more, calories during a weight training workout as I would doing cardio. Much like in my job where I look for efficiencies, I discovered while doing weight training, I could accomplish both building strength and improving my heart health. One way I am able to accomplish this is by improving the overall efficiency of my workout. Rather than performing and completing one exercise at a time during my workout, I perform two exercises during the same interval. For example, if I am doing a leg exercise when I break to rest, I will do another exercise using a different muscle group and then continue to switch back and forth until both exercises are complete. This allows me to complete more exercises in a shorter period of time. An added bonus of my workouts is that, not only do my workouts improve my overall physical strength, but they also impact my mental fortitude, which has enabled me to be just as strong mentally as I am physically.

**Q. With busy schedules and constant distractions, it can be challenging to make time for healthy eating habits. You have said that nutrition ranks very high on your list of priorities, and I am curious how you are able maintain a well-balanced diet with a busy schedule?**

**A.** Prepping my meals has been the key to my success. Some people will meal prep for the entire week; I choose to do no more than three days at a time. This prevents the meals from getting soggy and allows me to mix up the types of meals in the middle of the week. I prep four meals for each day, and while I am preparing at the start of the week, I look for foods that are on sale to help me determine what I will make. I also look for individual packages of foods like olive oil or yogurt to make the prep a little more convenient. A couple more things that I have found to be important when it comes to prepping meals are to choose foods that you enjoy eating (because

you will most likely be eating them a lot) and add spices. Spices allow you to mix up the flavor of the food even though you may be using the same base ingredients and they don't add any calories to the meal. Another recommendation would be to get creative in the kitchen and prepare your meals using a variety of methods. For example, if you are preparing chicken, instead of baking it in the oven, you could use a crockpot or pressure cooker. Not only will different methods change the length of time and work it takes to produce a meal, it will also allow you to vary the types of meals you can make while using the same ingredients.

