

WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

MAY 2021

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT – Interview with Colleen Crawford



By Seth Yoder

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

A. I am a communications associate in System Human Resource Services, and I started in December 2019. Prior to coming to the University of Illinois, I was a personal trainer/fitness instructor for 12 years and was also the Group Fitness Co-Director and Marketing Coordinator at Refinery Gym in Champaign. I am really happy to have been able to incorporate some of my fitness

background here at the university through my involvement with the System Office Wellness Committee.

Q. What type of health and wellness activities do you like to incorporate into your life?

A. Because of my background in fitness training, I like to incorporate a wide variety of physical activities in my life. Some of those activities include yoga, strength training and, while I'm not a runner, I do enjoy going on walks with my dogs. When it comes to fitness, I like to explore different types of training. With so many of them being available on-demand, it seems like my

options change almost every day. I also place a high value on good nutritional habits without being too focused on hitting certain numbers like with macro diets or excluding certain foods like a Keto diet. My goal is to achieve a balance with my approach to wellness, which requires considering the physical, nutritional, and mental aspects of myself and not necessarily in any particular order.

Q. Do you have any recommendations for fun exercises people can do at home?

A. There are a couple of important things to keep in mind when exercising at home. The first is to be creative. Not everyone is going to have all of the equipment you may find at a gym, so you can consider using household items to replace some traditional gym equipment. For example, if you don't have dumbbells at home, you could use canned food for your strength training exercises. The second is to find exercises that you enjoy doing and then set realistic expectations for yourself. By taking this approach, you will increase your motivation to exercise because you'll be doing something you enjoy. As a result, you could find it much easier to reach the goals you set for yourself. Another thing to consider when training from home is to go online and find on-demand training videos. There are a lot of great training videos on YouTube that can help you find the type of workout that fits your schedule and fitness goals. The important thing to consider here is to make sure you do some research. Find out about the fitness program and consult with your physician before you begin any type of extensive workout regimen.

Q. How important is mindset when it comes to maintaining a healthy lifestyle?

A. When it comes to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, a good mindset can make all the difference. For example, when someone is starting a new workout program to either lose weight or gain strength, a big part of their success will hinge upon their initial outlook. If you are disappointed and frustrated with how you look or feel, you may be setting yourself up for failure before you even start a new workout. If you take the attitude that you are interested in trying something new, you are open to the possibilities, and while it may be uncomfortable at first, you will be far more likely to succeed if you are willing to learn and expand your knowledge and experiences. Similarly, with diet, if you look at a new approach to nutrition as an opportunity to learn about new foods and/or cuisines rather than losing an opportunity to enjoy the types of foods you typically eat, the outcomes more often than not will be positive. **It really comes down to how we frame the change.** If the change in behavior or attitude is viewed through the lens of opportunity and growth rather than loss and sacrifice, you will not only feel better about the change, it will enable the change to be much more sustainable.

Q. Do you have any advice for people looking to make improvements to their mindset?

A. Anything we want to improve requires practice, discipline, and a lot of patience and self-forgiveness. A good way to start improving mindset is to take one small thing in your life that you would like to improve upon and concentrate on only improving that one thing. For example, if you would like to start going to bed 30 minutes earlier each night, set-up a routine that is practical for you and then start to practice it each day. While practicing this improvement you may have setbacks, but if you are acknowledging your effort when you succeed and recognizing what types of things prevent you from making this improvement, you should be able to ultimately see the benefits from the change. When you have a setback and feel like returning to your old habits, remember that you decided to make a change for a reason - your old habits were not contributing to your overall feeling of wellbeing. While making changes may be difficult and slipping into old routines seems easy in the moment, your perseverance through challenge will be rewarded. The key is to remember you are not trying to overhaul your mindset in one day, week, or month; you are building a practice that will continue to evolve throughout your life.

