

## Success Story: **Scott Ayotte**

## Scott Ayotte, Director of Affirmative Action and Equal

Opportunity, grew up in a household where exercise and overall health wasn't a priority. As a result, his family received a wake-up call about 6 years ago when his father had a stroke. This "impacted the entire family when it comes to lifestyles and healthy choices. I was able to see firsthand what some of the consequences are of certain lifestyles. It really shocked the conscience."

His wife Sarah works in healthcare, so Scott also has an outside influence contributing to his health



decisions. From these experiences, he has learned to "recognize how important health really is, and to enjoy the highest quality of life that you can, because you only get one." Scott has since made his fitness and nutrition choices a habit. He goes to the rec center

early to work out." Diet plays an important role as well, although "kale is not going to happen. I don't understand it," he laughs admittedly. However, "There are alternatives to the kale smoothie," so it's important to choose what works for you. That intentionality is important when it comes to health. There is a "conscious effort between me and my wife keeping each other accountable to get up and go work out." He

first thing in the morning because "no student in their right mind is going to get up that

explains that it was a "rough transition" to exercise in the morning, and is still difficult sometimes, but that the benefits outweigh the costs. "[Health] is a marathon, not a sprint. Recognize that it's going to be a process."

While important, Scott believes that diet and exercise aren't enough. "I look at mind,

body, and spirit being an interconnected system. Without a healthy mind, it's going to [negatively] impact the body and emotional well-being." He and Sarah make it a point to

incorporate mindfulness in the forms of meditation and gratitude. "We never ask, 'How was your day?' [Instead] we'll ask, 'What made you happy?' or 'What made you smile?'" Reframing the question acts as a reminder for them to focus on the good things. He adds that having a strong support system, like his wife and friends, supports a positive mindset. But when life inevitably gets difficult, "I look at it from an athletic perspective. There are going to be some points throughout the year or even day where you need to just sit on the

He tries his best to live his life through "the immortal words of 21st century philosopher, Pitbull: any day above ground is a great day," and adds, "It's never too late to get started on a healthier mind and body, one day at a time."

Read more success stories here.

bench for a little while and rest up - physically, emotionally, spiritually, whatever it may

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Overhaul: What

The New Tax

be."

reform webinar, and keep your financial goals on track with TIAA's live webinars in February. Join Fidelity for two free webcasts: During Be in the Financial Front Seat, you'll learn four financial questions to ask yourself each year, while Getting More out of Social Security will cover claiming strategies—

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including options if you're divorced or widowed. Learn more and reserve your spot today.





# exercise entry\* Feb 2-Feb 9

GVSU department through Feb 28

How can you help protect women's hearts?

Donate to the cause:

Red for Women website.

\*Faculty and staff who wear red to attend any faculty and staff group exercise class offered by Human Resources. A card with a donation link will be provided to participants.

Find out more information about the national campaign and find if you're at-risk at the Go

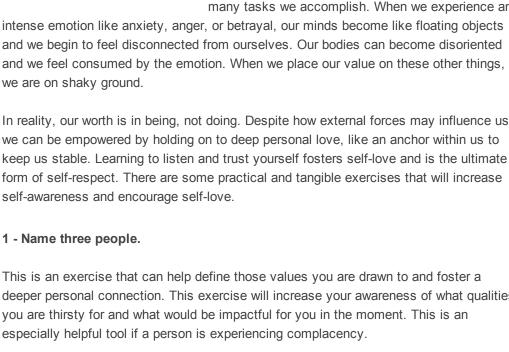
to space limitations. Drop in participation is first come first serve.

2. Donate online: <a href="www.heart.org/gvsu">www.heart.org/gvsu</a> or purchase a paper heart from a participating

Participants must sign a waiver to participate in the class. Some classes may be subject

Developing the Anchor

Self-Love



family members.

### intense emotion like anxiety, anger, or betrayal, our minds become like floating objects and we begin to feel disconnected from ourselves. Our bodies can become disoriented and we feel consumed by the emotion. When we place our value on these other things, In reality, our worth is in being, not doing. Despite how external forces may influence us,

Within: Two Exercises in

How do I become more connected to myself?

Often times we define our worth and value by how effective we are at work, how much we do for our children, how we provide for our families, or even how many tasks we accomplish. When we experience any

How do I develop internal strength?

How do I increase self-love?

Elisa Salazar, LMSW, GVSU Work Life Consultant

deeper personal connection. This exercise will increase your awareness of what qualities you are thirsty for and what would be impactful for you in the moment. This is an

Interestingly, the list you generate is like shining a flashlight on the values and skills you aspire to have in your own life. You can then begin to look for opportunities to expand

set an intention to act more in that manner throughout the day. It is great to get feedback

3. Use the list and look at how you spend your time, energy, and resources.

1. Think of three people who you admire. These could include celebrities, athletes, or

these values and skills through personal coaching or counseling. Perhaps you admire someone who speaks eloquently and you want more of that in your life. You could begin spending time with others who possess this quality, take a class to develop this skill, or

2. Hold them in your mind and list all the qualities you admire.

from others and it is also a very loving gesture to look within yourself for the same feedback. 2 - Breathe in \_\_\_\_\_, breathe out \_\_\_\_\_. This is a great exercise for learning how to give yourself what you need. It can be a calming and grounding exercise in times of stress. The "pre-work" to this exercise, is taking a moment to ask yourself, "what do I want or need more of in life?" For example: love, healing, forgiveness, financial freedom, discipline, contentment, peace, or strength.

2. Then consider the opposite, such as hate, resentment, fear, uncertainty, pain, debt, or anger. Then breathe that out, gently shaking your head "no."

1. To start the exercise, breathe in the word that represents what you want. You can

even nod slightly, indicating your confirmation of taking this word in.

Once in a groove a challenge is to let your mind wander. Maybe you started with healing

and love pops into your mind. Go there for a few rounds, then maybe self-control comes

up. When you allow your mind to wander, things from your heart will begin to surface to tell you what it needs.

These are tangible personal exercises in self-love, self-validation, and fostering a loving connection with yourself. This awareness and intentionality will spill over to your choices, reactions to difficult situations, and will push you toward functional healthy outlets. The

more these are built into your routine, the more growth and self-validation you will have to anchor within you, and a deep authentic internal trust is the best guide.

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Additional resources to support good emotional health and well-being