

Words About Wellness

Wellness Myths

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Wellness has been gaining influence in popular culture. This is fantastic, but especially with the spread of information on social media, it can be tough to distinguish truth from myth.

Social media platforms make it easy to disseminate information and tips. Unfortunately, not all of these posts are based on actual research or professional opinion, and may not be helpful. Just because a “fitfluencer” has thousands of followers and likes doesn’t mean their advice is credible.

Following are several myths (or misconceptions) commonly found on social media in particular, based on the findings of several health professionals (<https://www.phillymag.com/be-well-philly/2019/10/21/social-media-wellness-myths/>) and my own research. This dovetails a bit with my posts on technology usage and use of social media, but applies to consuming information in general as well. These same types of myths can be found in other places, so keep an eye out everywhere you wind wellness information. Try and be an informed consumer of information, and evaluate the credibility and credentials of the source and of the information itself. You can verify information through other sources or experience. If something seems too good to be true, do more research. If you are not sure or are considering a significant change in lifestyle based on wellness information, do even more research! Be a skeptic, do your research, experiment with what works for your own body, and consult a professional when needed.

Myth #1: There is A One Size Fits All Approach to Wellness

Social media posts do not reflect the amount of time, self-reflection, effort, and failure that go into any particular person’s pursuit of wellness. Social media is meant to be curated, which means we can all see what someone else is doing for their own personal wellness, and we might think that should work for us, too. It might, but it might not. There could be many other variables at play for you. Just because someone is a dietitian or trainer on social doesn’t mean they’re YOUR dietitian or trainer. We all have different bodies and minds, and therefore we have different needs, challenges, and paths.

Myth #2: Social Media Reflects Reality

This seems obvious, but it is easily forgotten. As noted above, social media posts and accounts are carefully curated. Most people’s social media posts would make you think that they exercise and cook constantly. Most do not! It is important to remember that a social media influencer is probably only posting 10 percent of their lives online, and you have no idea what the other 90 percent looks like

**MYTH
VS.
REALITY**

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Myth #3: Fad Workouts Work

Some influencers are constantly posting workouts that look cool or may be impossible for the average gym goer to do. In reality, these are not the only workouts these influencers did to get their results — they just look good on video and attract likes. Instead, you should look for research-based workouts that are based on fitness basics and focus on the whole body.

Myth #4: More Followers or Media Exposure Suggests More Expertise

Almost anyone can present themselves as an “expert” in the wellness industry on social media or other platforms if they have the right look and enough followers. Regardless of actual expertise, aesthetically beautiful and provocative posts get re-affirmed with more “likes,” but more likes does not mean the poster is a competent practitioner or more success from those consuming the information. Social media can be very helpful for dissemination of knowledge and supporting connectedness, but it cannot replace your own intuition and the responsibility to be your own advocate when it comes to your health and wellness. Keep in mind that this extends beyond platforms like Instagram. Even mainstream fitness magazines or those with media exposure (think someone like Dr. Phil) are not necessarily more credible just because they are famous.



Myth #5: There is One Healthy Look

We all know that most fitness bloggers are extremely fit and generally have a similar type (the same thing goes for models in fitness magazines). However, “healthy” does not have a specific look. Confidence is not found in only one certain body type. Someone’s musculature or tone in a picture tells you much less than you might think about their physical health, and nothing about their mental, or emotional health. Social media tends to equate “healthy” with “ripped,” which gives us an overly narrow view.

Myth #6: Shortcuts Work

Many wellness influencers promote slimming teas, fat burning gizmos, supplements, fad diets, or other shortcuts that claim to give you results in very little time or with little effort. The people promoting these products get some type of compensation, so their motivations lie in benefiting themselves rather than inspiring and helping others. Responsible wellness professionals will tell you that there are no shortcuts, and you have to invest time and effort to get real results, whether that be in fitness or other types of wellness.



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