A Personal Wellbeing Story: J. Nathan Matias

J. Nathan Matias is an assistant professor in the department of communication and a field member in information science. We thank him for sharing his inspiring (and relatable) story. - Michelle Artibee, Workforce Wellbeing

Professor Matias, you've been Tweeting outdoor photos every day for a while now. When did you start doing this and what prompted you to?

I started a personal practice of “daylight time” in the first few weeks after the COVID lockdown. I felt so overwhelmed moving class online that I spent several days without leaving my apartment. I quickly spiraled into a cycle of exhaustion, gained weight I didn’t want, and felt a bit like a spent birthday balloon a week after the party is over.

Then one day I put my foot down. I decided to schedule time every day to go outside, get some exercise, and enjoy the inspiring beauty of the Finger Lakes region. I felt so much happier and more relaxed—and my family noticed the difference too. If I’m tempted to stay in to finish just one more task or chore, they now bundle me outside anyway! This “daylight time” ritual has kept me grounded, even at the hardest of times this past year.

I also have another reason. A lot of my research looks at people being terrible to each other on the internet and what to do about it. I’m lucky enough to study those questions together with citizen scientists around the world who want to make the internet safer, more understanding, and kinder. We know that social media gives us strong feedback for moral outrage and Facebook actually promotes angry reactions five times more than like. So, each nature post is a small protest for beauty and goodness in digital environments where love feels like a radical act.
We’re hearing this winter is likely to be fierce. Will you continue with this habit?

Matias: Yes! I usually ride my bike during my daily daylight time, and I have come to love the unique beauty of every season. I have studded tires, warm clothes, and a thermos bottle that I hope will see me through another of central NY's stunning winters!

Any tips for your fellow faculty/staff who may want to cultivate a similar habit?

I have started listening to audiobooks while going outside. If you want to try something similar, a good book to start with might be Wendy Wood's book *Good Habits, Bad Habits: The Science of Making Positive Changes That Stick*. Then you can think about how to make it a habit, while you get a head start on giving yourself permission to take care of yourself!

PHYSICAL

Blog: *Sneaky Pandemic Weight Gain after Loss of Unintentional Activity*

Unintentional activity makes up a very important and often under-recognized part of total daily activity. Frequently it’s the type that burns *more* calories daily than intentional activity does. In this quick read, get some tips for adding unintentional activity back into your day.

*Time to “Fall back!”* (ABC 7)

Daylight saving time ends in New York at 2am on Sunday, Nov. 7. Small things can help ease the transition. Start slowly adjusting your sleep schedule now. Eat lightly on Saturday and Sunday to help keep your circadian rhythms balanced. Got kids? [Check out these tips from Care.com](https://www.care.com)
The COVID-19 Vaccine: Is It Safe for Children?  (Weill Cornell Medicine)
Nov. 10, 6-7:30pm via Zoom. Learn about the myths and misconceptions regarding COVID-19 vaccines and current knowledge and data concerning COVID-19 and its complications in children.

Flu and COVID-19: Similarities & Differences  (CDC)
Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. Check out the CDC guidance to understand the differences. Also note, public health guidance indicates that there is no risk to receiving a COVID-19 booster and flu vaccine simultaneously or soon after one another.

- Cornell students, faculty and staff who receive a COVID-19 booster are encouraged to upload documentation through Daily Check.
- For the Ithaca campus, Cornell Health offers on-campus clinics now through Nov. 11.

MENTAL

Let's Meditate with Cornell Wellness
Fridays, 9-9:30am, running Nov. 5 through Dec. 17 via Zoom. Perfect for all levels. Start to decompress from the week and unwind as you head into the weekend.

Free 7-day Work/Life Meditation Challenge (Ten Percent Happier App) The daily grind of work can be stressful and draining. The free challenge kicks off Nov. 8. Designed to help participants navigate life at work — from stress and burnout to tricky relationships with colleagues.

Article: Struggling to recall something? You may not have a memory problem – just an attention problem (TED) “We tend to pay attention to — and therefore remember — what we find interesting, meaningful, new, surprising, significant, emotional and consequential.”

FINANCIAL

A few things to consider when estimating Flexible Spending Health Account contributions
1. Endowed employees: review the Cornell guide closely to understand deadlines for flex account spending/reimbursement and rollover details.
2. Compare your annual health care spending prior to the pandemic and then during 2020 and 2021. Did it change? If so, why? Are these changes likely indefinite or short-term?
3. Factor in any new or changing needs of your covered family members while also closely reviewing your plan coverage and cost share responsibilities. Consider expenses such as:
   - Routine appointments, urgent care, and emergency care
   - Planned surgeries or procedures
   - Prescriptions
   - Dental (inc. orthodontics) and vision (inc. glasses/ contacts)
   - Assistance for disabled individuals
   - Counseling and psychiatric care
   - Medical equipment and supplies
   - Physical therapy and other treatments

Endowed Open Enrollment closes Nov. 24th at 4pm.
Five Money Musts (Fidelity)
Nov. 11, 2pm & Nov. 23, 10am. If you’re just starting to think about how to manage your money, learn about five basic money concepts to help you start your financial journey on the right foot.

When and How to Claim Social Security (Fidelity)
Dec. 1, 10am. If you anticipate Social Security will be your primary source of income in retirement, learn when and how to claim your benefit.

Strategies for Staying on Track (TIAA)
Dec. 7, 2pm. No matter how much or how little money you can save for retirement, it’s important that you start now and stay invested for your future. Learn about taking steps today for your future.

RELATIONSHIPS

Wellbeing@Work Interview Series: Relationships
Cornell hosts Jeremy Stewart and Michelle Artibee interview LaDreena Walton, Cornell Office of Institutional Equity & Title IX and Kristi Taylor, Advocacy Center of Tompkins County about relationship wellbeing. They discuss the rise of domestic violence during the pandemic, stigma in higher ed, and resources.

National Family Caregivers Month
(Tompkins County Weekly)
Tompkins Co. organizations are planning a series of events and programs to celebrate home care workers. What is home care? Health or supportive care provided by a professional in a person’s home – from children with illnesses and disabilities to senior citizens. Check out the National Caregiver Action Network resources and Cornell’s support network.

How to Make a Death Binder: A Gift to Your Loved Ones (Hospicare & Palliative Care Services)
Nov. 30, 5:30-6:30pm via Zoom. Collect your wishes, documents, and papers together, all in one place. A death binder is a tool to help organize and keep all your important documents, financial records, and personal wishes in one place. Preparing can make it much easier for your loved ones.

CULTURAL

Indigenous Heritage Month
One of the proponents of an American Indian Day was Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian, who was the director of the Museum of Arts and Science in Rochester, NY. He persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the “First Americans” and for three years...

- Cornell American Indian and Indigenous Studies Speaker Series
- Family Time with the Johnson: Stories from the People of the Longhouse (Nov. 6, 11am)

Wynton Marsalis with the Cornell Wind Symphony
Nov. 6, 7pm. In-person at Bailey Hall and Livestream. Cornell welcomes Pulitzer and Grammy-winning artist Wynton Marsalis as A.D. White Professor-at-Large. The Cornell Wind Symphony, along with Marsalis, perform a wide-ranging program including ragtime, blues, and jazz. Free, ticket required.
**Cornell Veterans Day Events**

Nov. 11 at various times/locations between 9:15am-12pm. The Cornell Veterans Colleague Network Group (VCNG) invites you to a Cornell Chimes Concert at 9:15 and at 9:30 and a guided walking tour of the Cornell Veterans Memorial (departing from the War Memorial at Baker Hall). The program culminates with a virtual and in-person presentation from Brigadier General Joseph Biehler at 11am, who will speak about the role of the military in supporting state crisis.

- [Cornell Inclusive Excellence Podcast, Ep. #8: Veterans at Work](#)
- [5 Ways to Celebrate Your Veterans on Veterans Day](Military.com)

**OCCUPATIONAL**

**Congratulate a Cornellian**
Recognize the nominees and awardees of the Cornell President’s Award for Employee Excellence by posting a message, photo, or video to the virtual kudo board.

**Welcome Home Wednesdays** (Live in Ithaca)
Nov. 3, 5:30-7pm, Modern Alchemy Game Bar. New to Cornell and working in Tompkins Co.? The Tompkins Chamber invites you to learn about services, programs, and volunteer opportunities while enjoying games and conversation.

**ENVIRONMENTAL**

**Understanding and Preparing Your Garden Soil** (CCE Tompkins)
Nov. 9, 6-7:30pm via Zoom. The way to ensure rich, workable soil for easy spring planting is to prepare in thefall.

**Wreath Making** (CCE Tompkins)
Options: Dec. 3, 6-7:30pm | Dec. 4, 10-11:30am | Dec. 4, 12:30-2pm. Make a beautiful evergreen wreath to decorate your home for the holidays!

**HELP OTHERS**

**Embrace your inner Elf!**
**Cornell Elves Winter Holiday Program Needs Your Help**
Team up with your colleagues to give to local families in need through the Cornell Elves Program this season! Raise and donate funds ([details](#)) or purchase/donate clothing, toys, and other items. [Contact an Elf Leader](#)

**Charitable Giving Update** (CCE Tompkins)
Nov. 11, 11am-1pm. NY State Assistant Attorney General Michael Danaher presents about charitable giving, scams, and things to consider when making donations.
About the Wellbeing Update:
Information provided by Cornell Work/Life, Cornell Wellness, and the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program about campus and community resources, programs, and events. Explore past editions or email wellbeing@cornell.edu to ask questions or suggest a resource. Published roughly every other week. Information shared does not indicate Cornell endorsement.