



A *Pedi-Press* Feature Series

Cultivating Connections Corner

May 2026 Edition



Welcome!

Dear All,

We are pleased to share a new addition to *Pedi-Press* - a dedicated **wellness edition**, created with you in mind. In the midst of the demands of our work, it serves as a timely reminder that caring for ourselves is essential to sustaining the care we provide to others.

Within these pages, you will find thoughtful insights and practical guidance to support your well-being - ranging from approaches to managing stress, to coaching perspectives, and ways to strengthen both physical and mental health. Each contribution reflects our shared commitment to fostering a culture of care, not only for our patients, but for one another.

We hope this edition offers both encouragement and renewal, and inspires you to take meaningful moments to invest in your own well-being. The strength of our community lies not only in what we do, but in how we support ourselves and each other along the way.

Thank you for all that you do each day, and for the compassion and dedication you bring to our community.

Warm regards,
Lara Shekerdeman

For more Department of Pediatrics updates:
Connect with [Dr. Shekerdeman on LinkedIn](#)

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Meaning and Introduction



The meaning behind the Cultivating Connections Logo

As we step into this wellness edition, we pause to reflect on the meaning behind the Cultivating Connections logo—a symbol that embodies the essence of our shared commitment to well-being.

At its center stands a tree, representing growth, resilience, and renewal. Much like our own journeys, it is both grounded and ever-evolving—rooted in strength while continually reaching toward new possibilities. It serves as a powerful reminder that wellness is not static but something we nurture and develop over time.

Each leaf, unique in its color, represents the diverse initiatives that shape and support our faculty. Individually, they reflect different pathways to well-being; together, they form a vibrant and unified whole. With an example of red representing development and growth, green representing social connections, and teal representing emotional well-being, this interplay of colors and connections highlights the strength found in diversity and the importance of a holistic approach to care.

More than a visual identity, the Cultivating Connections logo reflects a shared vision—one where growth is supported, connections are strengthened, and well-being is cultivated collectively.



The Department of Pediatrics Wellbeing Collective

This collective brings together the Department of Pediatrics Well-Being Team, Coaching for Optimal Reflection and Effectiveness (CORE), Faculty Development, and other aligned initiatives to support the well-being and professional fulfillment of Department of Pediatrics team members. Through connection, self-care, coaching, and meaningful community engagement, the group fosters a culture of support, collaboration, and belonging. By integrating complementary areas of focus—including emotional well-being, social connection, professional development, and relationship-building—these initiatives work together to cultivate a more engaged, resilient, and sustainable work environment for faculty and staff.

We're always open to suggestions and tips! We'd also love to hear how you debrief and practice self-care in your work life—share what works for you and how you take time to recharge!

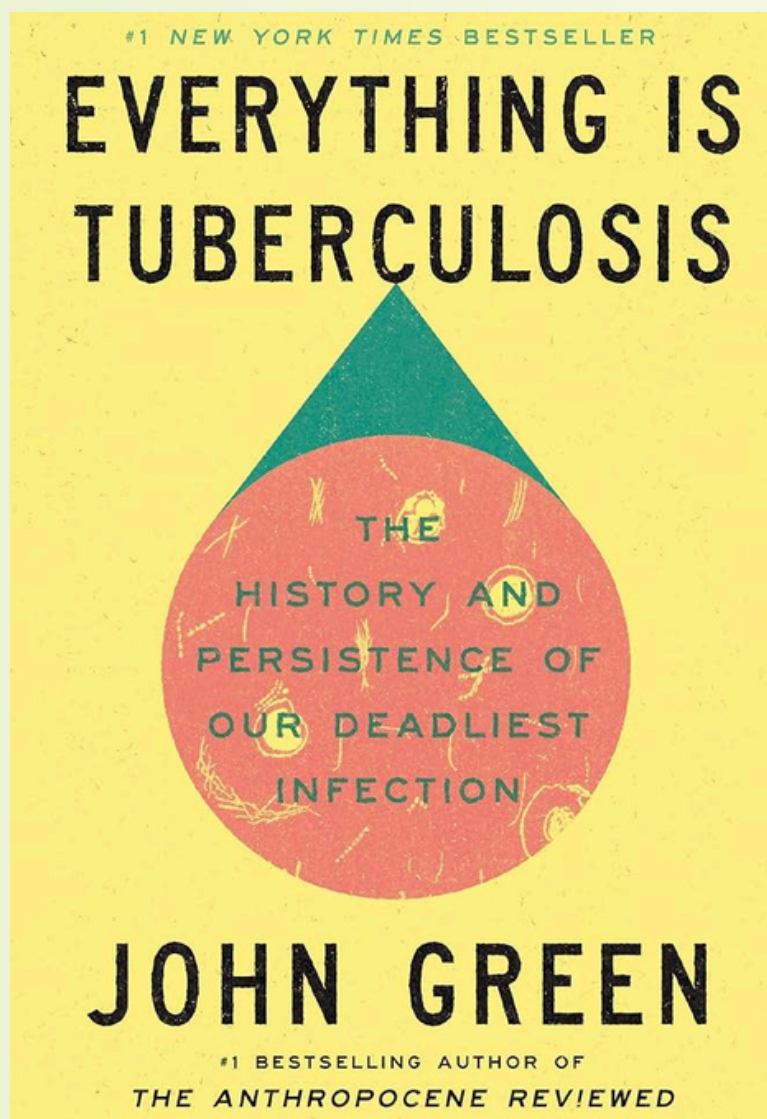
Email us at DOPCC@texaschildrens.org





Social Connections and Relationships

With Shreya Sheth, Lindy McGee and Daniel Mahoney



Interested in Joining the DOP Book Club?

We're excited to introduce the **Dept of Pediatrics Book Club!** This book club is a space to come together through stories, reflection, and shared conversation! We're hoping to have groups around each hospital campus, with a goal of getting together to discuss the book over a meal.

Our first book will be on **Everything is Tuberculosis** by **John Green!** This is a 2025 nonfiction work that examines why tuberculosis remains the world's deadliest infectious disease despite being both preventable and treatable. Through the lens of patient Henry Reider, Green explores the human impact of the disease while highlighting global health inequities, gaps in access to care, and the ongoing failure to eliminate a curable illness since the advent of effective treatment in 1955.

The interest form is now open. If you'd like to join, please complete the sign-up form to share your availability and receive upcoming meeting details and updates. Interest form will close on May 31st, we'll reach out with instructions on how to get the books in early June.

[Click here to sign up!](#)

Dine-In Program Highlights throughout all the campuses!

With Geeta Singhal, and Shreya Sheth with support from Drs. Ball and Shook

The **Dine-In program** supports medical staff well-being by fostering community, building resilience, and creating opportunities to connect with peers across different areas from West Campus, Main Campus, Woodlands and Austin! For more information on upcoming dates, please email **Dr. Geeta Singhal** at gsinghal@bcm.edu!

A recent highlight: Across the West, Main, Woodland, and Austin campuses—Austin not pictured below, but equally vibrant and full of great energy!—each gathering brought people together to enjoy great food, build meaningful connections, and share memorable experiences. From engaging conversations to a strong sense of community, every location offered a unique and worthwhile experience, making each event truly time well spent. Notably, West Campus welcomed around 20 attendees, and everyone loved the food!



West Campus



Main campus



Woodlands





Emotional Well-Being and Support

With Joan Shook



Listening-Wellness Rounds

Listening-Wellness Rounds are evidence-based tools endorsed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement and the AMA to gather information from frontline providers about their life at work. Listening-Wellness Rounds in the Department of Pediatrics began at the Woodlands Campus under the leadership of **Dr. Andy Chu**. A short time later, **Dr. Janani Sundaresan** organized rounds at West Campus. Then, in November 2025, the Department of Pediatrics Wellness Team, under the leadership of **Drs. Binita Patel, Geeta Singhal, Kelley Slack, and Joan Shook**, began conducting rounds in the Medical Center.

The sessions center around three questions:

- What brings you joy at work?
- What are the small but persistent challenges (“pebbles in your shoes”) that keep you from doing your best work?
- Are there individuals or teams who make your life easier and deserve special recognition (“shout outs”)?

The Wellness Team has now conducted 25 sessions with Department of Pediatrics groups across the Medical Center, learning and growing through each experience along the way! We find joy in helping patients and their families and find a great deal of satisfaction in caring for complex patients that couldn’t be handled elsewhere. We cherish our colleagues and the relationships that we have with our interdisciplinary teams (“it feels like a family here”). We also find great joy in watching students, residents, and fellows succeed and in training the next generation of clinicians.

We have heard about challenges to joy also. Some issues have been relatively easy to address (e.g., oatmeal and hot sauce in the physicians’ lounge, overnight parking for some faculty who come into the ICUs at night). More complex issues have surfaced, including technology-related concerns, equipment and staffing issues, and administrative challenges (e.g., preauthorizations, peer-to-peer communication, clinic schedules). Conversations are underway to address these concerns – We will continue to share updates as progress is made on these more complex issues.

The “shout-out” portion of the sessions is very special. Every group recognizes 15 or 20 people who make their lives better. After the meeting, the Wellbeing Team sends an email to each one of the people who was recognized and those folk uniformly email us back, expressing joy and gratitude for the recognition.

With their permission, a small sample of what we have heard includes:

“It is a privilege to be part of the Pediatrics team at Texas Children’s, and I am thankful for the opportunity to work alongside such dedicated and compassionate colleagues. Their commitment to patient care and teamwork inspires me every day. Please extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the faculty for their kind words and recognition. It means a great deal to me, and it encourages me to continue doing my best to support our team and our patients.”

“Thank you so much for sharing this thoughtful message. I am truly humbled and deeply honored by the recognition from faculty during the wellness rounds. It means a great deal to know that the support I provide has a positive impact on their work. Our clinical teams face many daily challenges, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute in ways that help make their responsibilities a little lighter. Working with this group is a privilege—they are like a second family to me—and I am always happy to assist in any way I can. Please extend my heartfelt appreciation to the faculty for their kind words. Their gratitude encourages me even more to continue giving my best each day.”

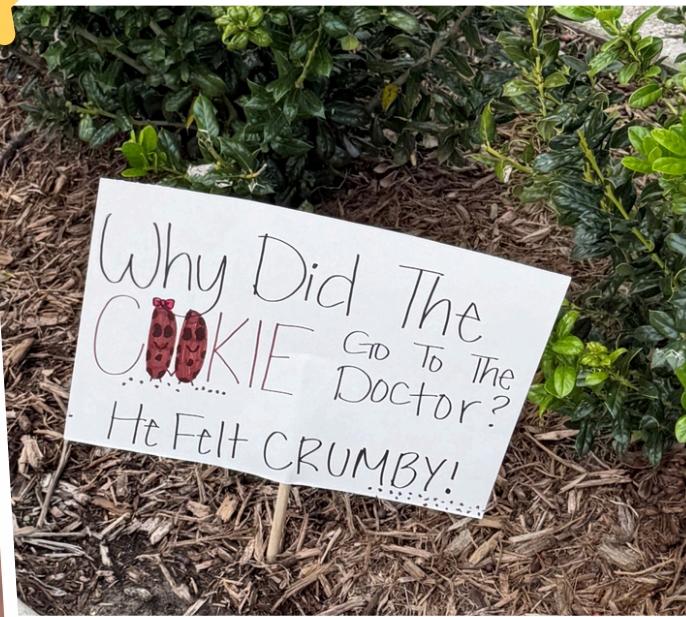
“Thank you very much for sharing this message with me. I am truly honored and sincerely grateful to be recognized in this way. It is deeply meaningful to know that my efforts are appreciated... Supporting our colleagues and fostering an environment where people feel valued and cared for is something I take great pride in and love doing.”

Our next steps are to work through the “pebbles” (and boulders too!). We will schedule follow-up meetings with your teams at the start of the next academic year. In the meantime, let us know how the Wellness Team can assist you. Contact us at jeshook@texaschildrens.org if interested.



Physical and Lifestyle Well-Being

With Andrew Chu



Highlighting the Woodlands Second Annual Walking Day Event!

On April 15, the **TCH Woodlands Provider Wellness Committee** hosted the **Second Annual Woodlands Walking Day**, a physical well-being initiative that is aligned with the National Walking Day program and is part of the committee's broader efforts to build community and promote physical well-being at our campus. The walk was well attended and supported by encouraging signs that were posted along the walking path by TCH The Woodlands volunteers. Cardiology took home the team prize for best Western-themed team spirit. We look forward to doing this again next April!



We Invite you for Gentle Yoga!

On **May 13 at Noon**, the TCH The Woodlands Provider Wellness Committee will be launching the Gentle Yoga series at **The Woodlands Campus second floor Conference Room B** under the direction of certified yoga instructor **Deanna Duggan, NP (APP - Neurology)**. In this class, **Deanna** will be leading participants in low-impact yoga exercises that can be done anywhere with just a chair or mat. Our goal is to provide a structured physical wellness activity that can be used even in the work setting to promote better focus and reduce physical stress. **This class is free and open to all faculty and staff, and mats will be provided.**



Gentle yoga

Wednesday, May 13, 2026

2nd floor conference room B

noon - 12:45

Relieve stress and feel tension melt away with a beginner-friendly yoga session

Led by Deanna Duggan, NP

Sponsored by TCH – The Woodlands Wellness Committee

Come as you are!
Don't have a mat? No worries, mats will be available to borrow



Development and Growth



COACHING FOR OPTIMAL REFLECTION
AND EFFECTIVENESS

with Gia Washington

Connection is the Work

If we aren't careful, we can start to think about connection as something extra - something we get to after the charting, consults, and the difficult parts of the day. But connection is not extra. Connection is the work.

How we connect shapes everything: communication, trust, teamwork, stress, and the environment we create for both families and each other. In high-pressure settings, disconnection creates friction. Sometimes it looks like unclear expectations or strained communication. Sometimes it looks like exhaustion, tension, or people quietly withdrawing from one another. Over time, that friction impacts morale, working climate, psychological safety, and retention.

Strong connection changes the environment. Teams that feel connected tend to communicate more directly, collaborate more effectively, and navigate challenges with greater trust and coordination.

I saw this clearly in a recent executive coaching session with someone at an important crossroads. As we slowed down and focused on values, one became immediately clear: connection. Not in a vague sense, but connection to the people who mattered most, connection to the kind of leader they wanted to be, and connection to their own sense of integrity.

Once that value surfaced, the decision itself became clearer. The conversation shifted from:

“What should I do?” to “What choice reflects who I want to be in relationship with others?”

That is often the work of coaching. Not simply helping people make decisions but helping them make decisions they can remain connected to, decisions that reflect their values, relationships, and the life they want to build.

Coaching in Practice

A few practices that can strengthen connection in daily work and leadership:

- **Anchor decisions in values.** Ask yourself: What do I want this decision to reflect?
- **Check for alignment, not assumptions.** Clarifying goals and expectations early can prevent unnecessary friction later.
- **Lead with curiosity before judgment.** Thoughtful questions often create more trust and openness than quick assumptions.

At CORE, this is the heart of our work. We support pediatric clinicians and leaders in navigating friction, strengthening relationships, and making values-aligned decisions that support healthier teams and more sustainable ways of working.

Because in environments centered on caring for others, connection is not separate from the work. It is the work.

To connect with the CORE Coaching Program, please click the button below

[To connect, click here!](#)



Institutional Wellness Resources

Texas Children's Hospital Resources:

Texas Children's Hospital is committed to enhancing employee well-being through a holistic approach that supports physical, mental, social, professional, and spiritual health. The organization fosters an environment where employees are encouraged to prioritize their overall wellness, helping them thrive both personally and professionally.



Required TCH Log-in to access these resources!

Scan or press QR code to learn more!



Employee Well-being services consist of programs like Eat Well programs that offer nutritional tips for a positive impact on your health, fitness classes, and other additional programs that help with your wellness journey!

Spiritual well-being resources are committed to supporting the well-being of every employee by continuously identifying ways to amplify, activate, and innovate available support services. Additionally, there are resources such as webinars where faculty can listen and learn about well-being, deepen their understanding of compassion, and practice mindfulness.



Baylor College of Medicine Resources:

Faculty Work-Life Resources

Baylor College of Medicine offers an array of additional benefits and perks supporting the well-being of our faculty community and their families. These perks can range from Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Tuition Assistance Plan, Caregiver Stress FAQ, and Ayco Financial Counseling etc.

Website: [Faculty Work-Life Resources](#)

The **BCM BeWell program** serves as the overarching health and wellness resource for the College. Awarded 1st place in 2021 and ranked 20th in the 2019 Healthiest 100 Workplaces in America by Healthiest Employers, the BCM BeWell program inspires and creates a culture of healthy living and wellness throughout the College. This program offers onsite, offsite, and virtual opportunities for employees to participate in events, programs, and workshops. In 2019, Baylor expanded the wellness program eligibility to spouses and domestic partners covered through the Baylor medical insurance plan. Part of Human Resources - Benefits, the BCM BeWell program works with various wellness-related departments, such as ergonomics, safety, and the College's gym. The program also works with external wellness-related programs such as United Healthcare, Fidelity, TIAA, and more.

Phone: 713-798-1500

Website: [BCM BeWell Program](#)

E-mail: wellness@bcm.edu



Scan or press QR code to learn more



Let us know how we did!
**Scan or press this QR code to share
your thoughts!**



If you're interested in wellness or would like to join our wellness initiatives, please contact us at **DOPCC@texaschildrens.org**. We also welcome submissions of wellness tips, stories, and ideas that support well-being and help foster a more connected, supportive environment!



A quote to remember from Lacey Schmidt:



"Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind. Most of us avoid clarity because we tell ourselves that we're being kind, when what we're actually doing is being unkind and unfair. Feeding people half-truths to make them feel better (which is almost always about making ourselves feel more comfortable) is unkind. Talking about people rather than to them is unkind. This lesson has so wildly transformed my life."

- Brene Brown, Dare to Lead

